

REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY



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REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

(1600—1830)

FOR INTERMEDIATE CLASSES

ANNOTATED AND WITH SPECIAL NOTES ON
METRE, RHYME AND FORM

SELECTED BY

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PREFACE

THE following selection is primarily intended for teaching the *language*. That task cannot be called completed unless the student has been familiarised with its metrical forms, and "Poetry" is therefore rightly included in any English course. Equally rightly, it has now come to be generally recognised that "Literature" *as such* should be kept out of the Intermediate course. But it does not follow that we must pervert the incipient "literary" consciousness with the second-rate verse that forms so large a part of many books of "English Poetry for Indian Students," stuff that no ordinary English reader has ever seen before or wants to see again. Nor, again, can we adequately represent the metrical capacities of the language by selections from a single writer, however great or versatile. Still less can we do so by confining ourselves to the, as yet, critically undigested mass of "Modern Verse."

Falling back, then, on the unchallenged anthologies of Palgrave and Quiller-Couch, and drawing on a fairly wide acquaintance with these books from childhood, and a good many years' experience of the Intermediate student, I have selected poems which, while reasonably within the range of the Intermediate student's intellect, are well known in English

"culture," and ought therefore to be known to him as an inheritor of that culture ; and which at the same time may definitely serve a competent teacher as illustrations of the capacities of the *language*.

The introductory lesson on English metre and its uses is an element usually omitted from the " Poetry " section of our English courses, owing to the bulk of the text prescribed. But to include such an element is unqualified gain, both as an immediate critical training in the form and sound of language and as a preliminary to the development of literary taste. The amount of actual text provided in this book is therefore less than usual, to allow full scope for the proper exposition in class of the principles of metre. Such exposition, however, might with advantage be deferred till after the poems themselves have been read and understood. For such understanding, the Notes should sufficiently supplement any good school dictionary, but in most cases the necessity for class-exposition is bound to remain ; so no attempt has been made to include any general interpretations of the various pieces.

Debatable omissions are inevitable in a collection such as this, but with the exception of Shakespeare, who must obviously stand apart (Spenser, who is best left aside as " the poets' poet," died in 1599), there is, I think, no really important name omitted within the period dealt with, and the pieces chosen are, I believe, characteristic enough of individuals to justify the application of " Representative " both to them and to the collection as a whole. The Victorian material proved too profuse and too widely familiar to be

included : representative selections from Tennyson and Browning, even for Intermediate students, should probably each have a volume to themselves. But within the limits set, this collection will, it is hoped, provide more satisfactory material than is usually or conveniently available for teaching the poetic side of *the English language*, and will at the same time leave the student in possession of material which will be of permanent value to him, should he be fortunate enough to proceed to the study of English Literature.

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THE MAIN FEATURES OF ENGLISH POETRY

I. METRE

FROM the earliest times, and long before the use of writing, men have expressed their thoughts not only in the prose of everyday speech, but also in what came, later, to be called poetic diction. Such diction permits much more freedom than prose in the order of words, and includes special words and forms of words, for the meaning of which, until we are sufficiently experienced in the language, we may turn to dictionaries and grammars ; but it mainly consists of special arrangements of the syllables and of the accents in the words employed.

These arrangements first appeared in the language as "cadence," literally the "falling" or, as we call it, the "beat" of a tune : and we observe such a "beat" in the national epics (such as the *Ramayana* of the Hindus or the *Iliad* of the Greeks) which have been handed on by memory from generation to generation during the "unlettered" ages of mankind. These epics, as we know, were originally sung, and both in them and in songs, which arose in the same way, we notice that the language has special "beats" to accompany the musical tunes.

But we find that the "beat" is retained in the language even when the tune is dropped : that is,

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that poetry can be recited as well as sung. As learning advanced, men came to study those "beats" and measure them, and applied to the results of their analysis the Greek term *metre*, which simply means "measure," the measure of the beats or accented syllables in a line of poetry. They were thus able to examine their poetic diction critically and reduce it to rule.

What, then, is the system of that "measurement"? The easiest system is clearly just to count the beats. Take some familiar lines in English poetry, such as these :

The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story.

What are the beats? We can mark them with an accent :

The splendour falls on castle walls
And snowy summits old in story.

Four to a line is the "measure" of beats in that poem, apparently.

Take another familiar piece :

Tell me not in mournful numbers
Life is but an émpy dream.

We can mark the accents at once, and here again we have evidently four "beats" to a line.

Are both these poems, then, in the same metre, of four accents to a line? and can we leave it at that? Read the quotations aloud, and there is clearly some difference between them. Where does it lie? In the relation of the accented to the unaccented syllables,

does it not? It would seem, then, that the unaccented syllables must come into our system of measurement, as well as the accented ones, or "beats."

It is here that the Greek and Latin languages, to which English owes so much, come to our help. If we read an old piece of purely Anglo-Saxon poetry, such as the following,

In a sūmmer sēason, when sōft was the sūn,
I enshrouded me wēll in a shēpherd's gárð,
And rōbed as a hērmít, unhóly of wórks,
Went wíde through the wórld, all wónders to hēar.
And ón a May mórning, on Málvern hílles,
Strange fáncies befél me, and fáiry-like dréams,

we notice that the beats occur quite irregularly, without regard to the number of unaccented syllables in between, and that other tricks of *sound*, as, for instance, the repetition of some particular consonant, rather than the regular arrangement of syllables, are used to make the language different from mere prose. That was because Anglo-Saxon was little more than what we should call a "vernacular" and had been hardly developed at all for literary purposes. In the Greek and Latin languages, on the other hand, through which for many centuries the whole of Europe derived all its learning and most of its literature, we have highly developed literary languages in which every syllable of a word has its own fixed "quantity" or length, irrespective of or rather controlling the accent that the reader or speaker puts on it. In brief, in English we use accent and can vary

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it very largely as we like, in Greek and Latin we are tied by the fixed "quantity" of syllables.

For instance, we accent, in English use, the Latin phrase *bona fide* ("in good faith") in the ordinary English way, i.e. putting the accent *back* to the earlier syllables, *bóna fíde*, thus making them sound longer than the second syllables. But in Latin it is the second syllables that are "long" in these particular words, and the phrase if used in a passage of Latin would sound much more like *bona' fide'*. It is not, however, thus that the "quantity" would be indicated, but by two very important symbols which are indispensable in the study of Metre, a short dash (ˉ) above the vowel to indicate a long syllable, and a short curve (˘) similarly placed to indicate a short one: thus *bónā fídē* is the correct pronunciation, not as we pronounce it, *bóna fíde*.

How, then, does this affect our English poetry? In this way, that as English writers adopted and absorbed, into the English literature they were forming, the "classical" languages and traditions, they also adopted the classical methods of measurement or Metre in their lines of poetry. At the same time they could not altogether lose that English freedom of *accent* which they were employing daily in their spoken language, and so English literature has evolved a probably unique material for the expression of poetic thought, a language in which the *meaning* insists on the right to put the accent where it likes,¹

¹ Chiefly with monosyllables: e.g. "you" is normally a long or accented syllable, "that" a short or unaccented one. But

but which is ready to submit, for the sake of regularity and "discipline," to a reasonable amount of measurement of its syllables by "quantity." If the latter element is given too much importance by any writer, his verse sounds mechanical: if the former is employed too freely, we find it hard to recognise, in a written poem, which syllables are to be accented, and thus lose the "beat." To illustrate, recite the following in the tone usually adopted by a school-boy, and what is meant by "mechanical" will be clear enough:

Day by day the little daisy :

or, at the opposite extreme, see if you can read the following line at first sight as the poetry that it really is :

His heart, to me, was a place of palaces and pinnacles
and shining towers.

To return, however, to our simpler examples. We have now got

Thē splēndour fālls ōn cāstlē wālls
And snōwŷ summits ōld īn stōry.

and

Tēll mē nōt īn mōurnfūl nūmbers
Līfē īs bŭt ān ēmptŷ drēam.

If our "shorts" and "longs" are to be of any use, though, we have now to cut them up into fixed

how often do we say, "Can you do that?" But the statement is true of many longer words too: e.g. put special emphasis (as might be quite likely in conversation) on the syllables "are" and "un-" in the following—"They *are* so *un*acquainted with man"—and no one would suspect that it was a line from Cowper's "anapaestic" poem (p. 47). See, too, "Notes on Metre, etc."—Wordsworth (p. 99).

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sections. Actually this has already been done unconsciously by the poet when arranging his beats, and in the first case we can "measure" out the lines as follows,

The sp̄en | dōur fālls | ōn cāst | lē wālls |
And snōw | ŷ sūm | mīts ōld | ŷ in stōr | ŷ,

giving us eight sections, each consisting of a long or accented syllable preceded by a short or unaccented one, with an odd syllable over. These sections are called metrical "feet," and we find we have four "feet" in the first line and four and a half in the second. That particular combination, "short-long," was very familiar in Greek poetry, and was called an *iamb* (note that the name is itself a "short-long") or an *iambic foot*, and a glance through any English poetry book will show that the larger part of English verse can be, roughly, cut up into such feet, that is, that most English poetry is written in "iambic metre."

But will this apply to the second two lines? Try it :

Tell | mē nōt | ŷ in mōurn | fūl nūm |
bērs līfe | ŷ is bŭt | ŷ an ēmp | ŷ tŷ dŕeam.

It hardly sounds right, does it? But cut it up in the natural way of reading it,

Tell mē | nōt ŷ in | mōurnfŭl | nūmbērs |
Līfe ŷ is | bŭt ŷ an | ēmpŷ | dŕeam,

and we realise the poet has been using a different kind of "foot," a "long-short" pair equally familiar to the Greeks, and named by them a *trochee*, and that

this is *trochaic metre*, of four feet in the first line and three and a half in the second.

These are the two commonest "feet" admitted by the great majority of English poets as the measure by which the character and regularity of "beats" in their verse may be checked by those who wish to analyse their work. They no more think of them in detail when writing than we think of the length of our pace when walking; but unless we *have* a regular pace we are not much company on a walk, and so it is with the writing of poetry according to the general English tradition. The "pace" of poetry is its "metre," the "measure" of the "feet" by which it proceeds.

There are other feet employed in Greek and Latin metre which English poetry has also admitted as useful means of measuring its native "beats," viz. the *dactyl(us)* (or "finger"), one long and two short syllables (— ~ ~), like the one long and two short joints of a finger; the *anapaest*, or "striking up" foot, two shorts and a long (~ ~ —); and the *spōndēe*, or two longs (— —). All these "feet" and some other rarer ones which we need not trouble about (one will be found in Charles Lamb's poem on p. 69) may be traced in normal English poetry.

An English poem usually has one of these forms of foot predominating, whatever number of feet may be adopted for its standard line or lines, and from that foot the metre of the poem takes its name. As already said, by far the commonest English metre is "iambic," then comes "trochaic," and after that

" anapaestic " or " dactylic " according to the fashion of the period. All these metres will be found in the following poems, but the important thing to notice is that no good English poem will slavishly confine itself to a set " foot." The Anglo-Saxon tradition of the irregularly recurring " beat " or accent insists on retaining its freedom, and so you will find very frequently a variation of the foot used, either regularly or occasionally, which just makes all the difference to the expressiveness of the line.

The last stanza of the first poem in this collection will illustrate the point effectively. A glance will show us that the metre is *iambic* :

Hōw hāp | pŷ is | hē bōrn | ānd tāught.

But are we going to read with a similar beat :

This mān | is frēd | frōm sēr | vīle bānds |

Ōf hōpe | tō rīse | ōr fear | tō fall |

Lōrd ōf | hīmsēlf | — ?

How shall we actually accent the first and third lines to get the most effect ? Clearly

This man is frēd

and

Lōrd of hīmsēlf.

In other words, we not only may, but are meant to, read the first foot in each of those lines as a *trochee*, and the gain in both sound and sense is obvious. Similarly we shall find an *anapaest* or *dactyl* put into an iambic line to quicken up the tone and feeling, or a *spondee* substituted to make, with its two slow

syllables, a solemn pause. The study, however, of these variations in any individual poem or author is the business of the student of literature. Here we are merely concerned with the language and with learning the general rules and principles on which not only the masters of the language, the real Poets, have worked, but which anyone aspiring either to write or read English poetry with understanding must observe.

To summarise all that has been said, the genius of the English language and its unique value, in poetic diction, consists in this, that to the tradition of freedom of expressive *sound* (the old Anglo-Saxon "beat") it has voluntarily but not slavishly applied the ordered *measures* of the Greek and Latin classical traditions. And it is to a large extent to the capacities of the language thus placed at their disposal that we owe the infinite range of Shakespeare's utterance, the "organ-voice" of Milton, and the music of all the other great masters of English Poetry.

II. RHYME AND FORM

THE understanding of what is meant by English metre is as essential to the reader of the language as to the student of the literature. If its character and elements are now clear, we can dismiss in fewer words the other more prominent features of English poetry.

Metre may be produced in any length or lengths of line, and regularity of such length or lengths is observed in most of the forms of poetry employed by

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English writers. If a set number of lines, either of the same or of regularly varied length, is repeated regularly, the group is called a *Stanza*. And the tradition of regularity further demands that the stanzas should usually be of the same form and length throughout a poem. Numerous examples will be found in the following collection. The varieties of Stanza are, of course, infinite, but the commonest forms will be readily observed, and may be measured out by the student for himself.

In addition, however, to the measurement of syllables (*i.e.* metre), English poetry very commonly employs, and relies for some of its chief effects on, a *regularly recurring similarity of sound*, and such similarity is called *Rhyme*. With a few rare exceptions, rhyme is employed only at the conclusion of the lines, the pairs of sounds usually coming in consecutive lines (which are then called *couplets*) or in alternate lines. But, again, there are further varieties in practice, which the student can observe and note for himself at his leisure.

Blank verse should properly mean any unrhymed verse, but is a term specially applied to that exceedingly common five-foot iambic line, repeated indefinitely without any rhyming ends, in which the greater part of the plays of Shakespeare, the great epics of Milton, and most of the other famous narrative poems of English literature have been written.

A *Sonnet* is a special single-stanza form of rhymed poem in which the great poets have expressed some of their most beautiful thoughts. Though the study of the forms employed by the artist is included more

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properly in the study of the Literature, the outline of the rules of the Sonnet given in the Notes will make clearer the genius with which Wordsworth, for example, in the Sonnets here given, could utilise the material of language, even under the most cramping conditions of such rules, to produce the most inspiring utterances, both in sound and meaning.

GENERAL NOTE

For the purposes of this book the details given about each Poet should be sufficient to "place" him and his work for intelligent understanding of the pieces selected. The notes accompanying the pieces deal solely with difficulties of expression and allusion, and *the use of a good dictionary is essential*. Points regarding Metre, Rhyme and Form have been collected at the end, and may be considered separately when the poems themselves have been read and understood.

SIR HENRY WOTTON

(1568-1639)

THE following poem is probably far better known than the name of the author.

THE CHARACTER OF A HAPPY LIFE

How happy is he born and taught
That serveth not another's will ;
Whose armour is his honest thought
And simple truth his utmost skill !

Whose passions not his masters are, 5
Whose soul is still prepared for death,
Untied unto the world by care
Of public fame, or private breath ;

Who envies none that chance doth raise
Nor vice ; Who never understood 10
How deepest wounds are given by praise ;
Nor rules of state, but rules of good :

Who hath his life from rumours freed,
Whose conscience is his strong retreat ;
Whose state can neither flatterers feed, 15
Nor ruin make oppressors great ;

Who God doth late and early pray
More of His grace than gifts to lend ;
And entertains the harmless day
With a religious book or friend ; 20

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—This man is freed from servile bands
Of hope to rise, or fear to fall ;
Lord of himself, though not of lands ;
And having nothing, yet hath all.

NOTES

- L. 6. **Still**—always.
- L. 8. **Breath**—whispers.
- L. 10. **Nor** whom vice raises.
- L. 11. Never experienced how an honourable man's feelings may be hurt by insincere praise.
- L. 12. **Nor** ever understood rules of state, but only rules of good.
- L. 16. **Nor** can his ruin.

BEN JONSON

A GREAT Elizabethan dramatist, poet and critic, and a friend of Shakespeare. His poem *To Celia* is best known as a song.

Drink to me only with thine eyes,
 And I will pledge with mine ;
 Or leave a kiss but in the cup
 And I'll not look for wine.
 The thirst that from the soul doth rise
 Doth ask a drink divine ,
 But might I of Jove's nectar sup,
 I would not change for thine.

I sent thee late a rosy wreath,
 Not so much honouring thee
 As giving it a hope that there
 It could not wither'd be ;
 But thou thereon didst only breathe
 And sent'st it back to me ;
 Since when it grows, and smells, I swear,
 Not of itself but thee !

- L. 3. ~~but~~—only.
L. 7. ~~Jove~~—or Jupiter, King of the Gods in Greek mythology.

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(II) *THE NOBLE NATURE*

It is not growing like a tree
In bulk, doth make Man better be ;
Or standing long an oak, three hundred year,
To fall a log at last, dry, bald, and sere :
A lily of a day 3
Is fairer far in May,
Although it fall and die that night—
It was the plant and flower of Light.
In small proportions we just beauties see ;
And in short measures life may perfect be. 10

NOTES

- L. 3. *Year*—plural, poetic and colloquial.
L. 9. *Just*—"exact," and so "true."

ROBERT HERRICK

(1591-1674)

A RATHER frivolous but good-hearted parson-poet of the Restoration period, who wrote many well-known poems of a character similar to these.

(I) *TO THE VIRGINS, TO MAKE MUCH OF TIME*

Gather ye rose-buds while ye may,
Old Time is still a-flying :
And this same flower that smiles to-day,
To-morrow will be dying.

The glorious Lamp of Heaven, the Sun, 5
The higher he's a-getting
The sooner will his race be run,
And nearer he's to setting.

That age is best which is the first,
When youth and blood are warmer ; 10
But being spent, the worse, and worst
Times, still succeed the former.

Then be not coy, but use your time ;
And while ye may, go marry :
For having lost but once your prime, 5
You may for ever tarry.

NOTES

L. 2. **A-flying**—"a" is the common English prefix, signifying
"at" or "on," as in "aboard," "asleep."

L. 11. **Being spent**—the first age being spent.

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(II) *TO BLOSSOMS*

Fair pledges of a fruitful tree,
 Why do ye fall so fast ?
 Your date is not so past,
 But you may stay yet here awhile
 To blush and gently smile, 5
 And go at last.

What, were ye born to be
 An hour or half's delight,
 And so to bid good-night ?
 'Twas pity Nature brought ye forth 10
 Merely to show your worth,
 And lose you quite.

But you are lovely leaves, where we
 May read how soon things have
 Their end, though ne'er so brave : 15
 And after they have shown their pride
 Like you, awhile, they glide
 Into the grave.

NOTES

- L. 1. **Pledges**—gifts with a promise accompanying them.
 L. 10. **'Twas pity**—it was a pity that
 L. 15. **Brave**—making a fine show.

GEORGE HERBERT

(1593-1632)

Also a parson, but deeply devotional. His religious poems are still treasured.

(I) *VIRTUE*

Sweet day, so cool, so calm, so bright !

The bridal of the earth and sky—

The dew shall weep thy fall to-night ;

For thou must die.

Sweet rose, whose hue angry and brave 5

Bids the rash gazer wipe his eye,

Thy root is ever in its grave,

And thou must die.

Sweet spring, full of sweet days and roses, 10

A box where sweets compacted lie,

My music shows ye have your closes,

And all must die.

Only a sweet and virtuous soul,

Like season'd timber, never gives ;

But though the whole world turn to coal, 15

Then chiefly lives.

NOTES

L. 5. **Brave**—compare L. 15 of preceding poem.

L. 11. **My music shows**—my song declares.

L. 14. **Never gives**—never fails

L. 15. **Turn to coal**—be burnt to ashes.

(II) *THE GIFTS OF GOD*

When God at first made Man,
 Having a glass of blessings standing by ;
 Let us (said He) pour on him all we can :
 Let the world's riches, which disperséd lie,
 Contract into a span. 5

So strength first made a way ;
 Then beauty flow'd, then wisdom, honour, pleasure :
 When almost all was out, God made a stay,
 Perceiving that alone, of all His treasure,
 Rest in the bottom lay. 10

For if I should (said He)
 Bestow this jewel also on My creature,
 He would adore My gifts instead of Me,
 And rest in Nature, not the God of Nature,
 So both should losers be. 15

Yet let him keep the rest,
 But keep them with repining restlessness :
 Let him be rich and weary, that at least,
 If goodness lead him not, yet weariness
 May toss him to My breast. 20

NOTES

L. 5. **Contract into a span**—be collected within the small dimensions of a human being.

L. 6. **Made a way** } —came out of the glass.
 L. 7. **Flow'd** }

L. 16. **Keep the rest**—here “remainder,” a play on the word.

JAMES SHIRLEY

(1596-1666)

MAINLY a dramatist, but chiefly known now by the following famous *Ode*.

DEATH THE LEVELLER

The glories of our blood and state
Are shadows, not substantial things ;
There is no armour against fate ;
Death lays his icy hand on kings :
Sceptre and Crown 5
Must tumble down,
And in the dust be equal made
With the poor crooked scythe and spade.

Some men with swords may reap the field,
And plant fresh laurels where they kill 10
But their strong nerves at last must yield ;
They tame but one another still :
Early or late
They stoop to fate,
And must give up their murmuring breath 15
When they, pale captives, creep to death.

The garlands wither on your brow ;
Then boast no more your mighty deeds ;
Upon Death's purple altar now
See where the victor-victim bleeds : 20

22 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

Your heads must come
To the cold tomb ;
Only the actions of the just
Smell sweet, and blossom in their dust.

NOTES

- L. 1. **Blood**—race or parentage.
L. 9. **The field**—of battle, instead of harvest.
L. 10. **Laurels**—the leaves used as a wreath for the victor in a contest in classical Greek times. These two lines contrast, metaphorically, the work of the farmer and of the soldier.
L. 19. **Purple**—with blood
L. 20. **Victor-victim**—a word framed for the occasion, “the victim, who was once a victor.”

JOHN MILTON

ONE of the greatest names in English literature, and most famous for his great religious epic *Paradise Lost*, written in *blank verse*. He was also the author of many other wonderful poems, most of which, however, are so steeped in classical learning as to be unintelligible without special study.

(I) *ON HIS BLINDNESS*

To serve therewith my Maker, and present
My true account, lest He returning chide,—
Doth God exact day-labour, light denied?
I fondly ask :—But Patience, to prevent

That murmur, soon replies ; God doth not need
 Either man's work, or His own gifts : who best 10
 Bear His mild yoke, they serve Him best : His state

Is kingly ; thousands at His bidding speed
And post o'er land and ocean without rest :—
They also serve who only stand and wait.

24 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

NOTES

For an explanation of the "Sonnet" form in poetry, see the separate note at the end of the book

- L 1 **Is spent**—has been used up
- L 3 **That one talent**—a reference to the parable of Jesus given by *St Matthew* (Ch xxv verses 14-30) The man who hid his talent (literally a piece of money, but this parable has given it the now more common metaphorical meaning) was condemned for not having used it for profit to himself and his master Milton regrets that he cannot use the eyes God gave him
- L 4 **Lodg'd**—is lodged, i.e. deposited
More bent—is more bent, i.e. inclined
- L 6 **My true account**—allusion to the parable still
- L 7 The main sentence only begins here—I *foolishly* [see dictionary] ask whether God demands daily work when He has refused me light
- L 13 **Post**—hasten
- L 14 This line is so often quoted as to be almost a proverb

(II) SATAN ENTHRONED IN HELL

(From *PARADISE LOST*, Book II lines 1-17)

High on a throne of royal state, which far
 Outshone the wealth of Ormus and of Ind,
 Or where the gorgeous East with richest hand
 Showers on her kings barbaric pearl and gold,
 Satan exalted sat, by merit raised 5
 To that bad eminence, and, from despair
 Thus high uplifted beyond hope, aspires
 Beyond thus high, insatiate to pursue
 Vain war with Heaven, and, by success untaught,
 His proud imaginations thus displayed — 10
 "Powers and Dominions, Deities of Heaven!—

For, since no deep within her gulf can hold
 Immortal vigour, though oppressed and fallen,
 I give not Heaven for lost ; from this descent
 Celestial Virtues rising will appear 15
 More glorious and more dread than from no fall,
 And trust themselves to fear no second fate ! ”

NOTES

Paradise Lost is an Epic in twelve books describing how Satan and a band of fellow angels rebelled against God, were cast out of Heaven into Hell, and revenged themselves by teaching Man, then newly created, to sin, thus losing his right to remain in the Paradise that God had made for him

In this piece Satan, making the best of his new circumstances, has just established in Hell a rival Kingdom to God's in Heaven.

L 2 **Ormus**—a port in the Persian Gulf, famous for its pearls and jewels

Ind—poetic form of “India”

L 3 **Or where**—i.e. of the places where

L 7 **Beyond hope**—i.e. his previous hopes when he first fell

L 8 **Beyond thus high**—beyond even that height

L 9 **Success**—in its original literal sense, what *follows* or *succeeds* an action, here, therefore, equal to “ill fortune”

L 11 **Powers and Dominions**—names for degrees of angels, according to the medieval ideas about them

Deities—here “divine beings” rather than “gods”

Ls 12 to 17 A parenthesis, explaining why he still addresses them as belonging to Heaven, though they are in Hell After that he proceeds with his speech

L 14 **I give not**—I do not consider Heaven lost

L 15 **Virtues**—another medieval term for an order of angels

L 16 **Than from no fall**—than if they had never fallen

L 17. And will have such trust in themselves as not to fear

(III) *DEATH RESISTS THE EXIT OF SATAN**(From PARADISE LOST, Book II. lines 681-703)*

" Whence and what art thou, execrable Shape,
 That dar'st, though grim and terrible, advance
 Thy miscreated front athwart my way
 To yonder gates ? Through them I mean to pass,
 That be assured, without leave asked of thee. 5
 Retire ; or taste thy folly, and learn by proof,
 Hell-born, not to contend with Spirits of Heaven."

To whom the Goblin, full of wrath, replied :—
 " Art thou that Traitor-Angel, art thou he,
 Who first broke peace in Heaven and faith, till then 10
 Unbroken, and in proud rebellious arms
 Drew after him the third part of Heaven's sons,
 Conjured against the Highest—for which both thou
 And they, outcast from God, are here condemned
 To waste eternal days in woe and pain ? 15
 And reckon'st thou thyself with Spirits of Heaven,
 Hell-doomed, and breath'st defiance here and scorn,
 Where I reign king, and, to enrage thee more,
 Thy king and lord ? Back to thy punishment,
 False fugitive ; and to thy speed add wings, 20
 Lest with a whip of scorpions I pursue
 Thy lingering, or with one stroke of this dart
 Strange horror seize thee, and pangs unfelt before."

NOTES

In this piece Satan's exit from the gates of Hell has been resisted by a terrible form hitherto unknown to him. Satan speaks first, angrily demanding who he is, and "the Goblin" replies that he is Death.

- L. 1. **Execrable**—see dictionary.
- L. 5. **That be assured**—be assured of that
- L. 6. **Taste thy folly**—experience how foolish thou art.
By proof—by proving it in a fight with me.
- L. 7. **Hell-born**—since *you* were born in Hell, not to fight with a Spirit of Heaven like myself.
- L. 12. **The third part**—*i. e.* one-third of the number of.
- L. 13. **Con-jured**—"sworn together," literal meaning of the original Latin
- L. 17. **Hell-doomed**—doomed to Hell: a retort to Satan's taunt, "Hell born."
- L. 18. **To enrage thee more** I will add that I am *thy* King.
- L. 20. **Add wings** to aid thy speed.
- L. 21. **Scorpions**—metaphorical for any severe scourge
Compare the famous reply of the son of King Solomon to a deputation asking for milder government: "My father chastised you with whips, but I will chastise you with scorpions" (See the Bible, *The First Book of Kings*, Ch. xii)
- L. 23. **Strange horror, pangs unfelt before**, viz the still unknown terrors and pains of death.

RICHARD LOVELACE

(1618-1658)

A CAVALIER poet of the Civil Wars, known chiefly for the following.

(I) *TO LUCASTA, ON GOING TO THE WARS*

Tell me not, Sweet, I am unkind
That from the nunnery
Of thy chaste breast and quiet mind,
To war and arms I fly.

True, a new mistress now I chase, 5
The first foe in the field ;
And with a stronger faith embrace
A sword, a horse, a shield.

Yet this inconstancy is such
As thou too shalt adore ; 10
I could not love thee, Dear, so much,
Loved I not Honour more.

NOTES

L. 1. **Nunnery**—see dictionary; metaphorical here, "the peaceful company of."

LS. 11, 12. So often quoted as to be almost a proverb.

(II) *TO ALTHEA, FROM PRISON*

When Love with unconfinéd wings
 Hovers within my gates,
 And my divine Althea brings
 To whisper at the grates ;
 When I lie tangled in her hair 5
 And fetter'd to her eye,
 The Gods that wanton in the air
 Know no such liberty.

When flowing cups run swiftly round
 With no allaying Thames, 10
 Our careless heads with roses bound,
 Our hearts with loyal flames ;
 When thirsty grief in wine we steep,
 When healths and draughts go free—
 Fishes that tippie in the deep 15
 Know no such liberty.

When, (like committed linnets), I
 With shriller throat shall sing
 The sweetness, mercy, majesty
 And glories of my King ; 20
 When I shall voice aloud how good
 He is, how great should be,
 Enlargéd winds, that curl the flood,
 Know no such liberty.

Stone walls do not a prison make, 25
 Nor iron bars a cage ;
 Minds innocent and quiet take
 That for an hermitage ;

30 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

If I have freedom in my love
 And in my soul am free, 30
 Angels alone, that soar above,
 Enjoy such liberty.

NOTES

- Ls 1, 2. **Unconfined**—Love cannot be fettered, but flies in and out of prison as he wills
- L 3 **Brings**—Love is the subject and Althea the object of the verb
Divine—merely the extravagant expression of a lover
- L 4 **Grates**—gratings
- Ls 5, 6 **Tangled, fetter'd**—metaphorical captivity that yet makes him feel freer, in spite of being in prison, than even the birds
- L 7 **Wanton**—play, sport
- L 9 **Flowing**—overflowing
Run—circulate, are passed round
- L 10 **Thames**—whole for part Thames = water of the Thames—simply water An old fashioned poetic trick
- L 10 **Allaying**—diluting the wine
- Ls. 11, 12 **Roses, flames**—literal rose wreaths, perhaps, but metaphorical flames of loyalty
- L 15 **Tipple**—colloquial, for “drink,” usually used of a drunkard Compare “To drink like a fish”
 Give him good company and wine, and although in prison he feels freer than even the fishes in the sea
- L 17 **Committed**—to prison, so “caged”
- L 22 **Should be**—but was not, because the King (Charles I) and his Cavalier party were being defeated by the army of the Parliament in the Civil War
- L 23 **Enlarged**—free from all restraint
Curl the flood—twist the sea into waves Let him sing loyally the praises of his king, and he is freer than the wind, even in prison
- L 28 **That**—viz stone walls and iron bars This last stanza is nearly as famous as the last couplet of the preceding poem.

JOHN BUNYAN

(1628-1688)

THE world-famous author of *The Pilgrim's Progress* (an allegory of the Christian life), and not regarded as a poet, but the following and one or two other religious poems are introduced in his prose works.

THE SHEPHERD BOY SINGS IN THE VALLEY OF HUMILIATION

He that is down needs fear no fall,
He that is low, no pride ;
He that is humble ever shall
Have God to be his guide.

I am content with what I have, 5
Little be it or much :
And, Lord, contentment still I crave,
Because Thou savest such.

Fullness to such a burden is 15
That go on pilgrimage :
Here little, and hereafter bliss,
Is best from age to age.

NOTE

L. 8. **Such**—such men.

JOSEPH ADDISON

ANOTHER famous prose-writer, who happens to have left us the following still well-known hymn among some forgotten poems.

The spacious firmament on high,
With all the blue ethereal sky,
And spangled heavens, a shining frame,
Their great Original proclaim.
Th' unwearied Sun from day to day
Does his Creator's power display ;
And publishes to every land
The work of an Almighty hand.

In Reason's ear they all rejoice,
And utter forth a glorious voice ;
For ever singing as they shine,
" The Hand that made us is divine."

NOTES

The author's vocabulary is somewhat classical. Each word will be perfectly intelligible if its Latin derivation is sought in a good dictionary.

L 18 **Move round**—the old idea that the sun and stars moved round the earth.

Dark—because the earth gives out no light of its own.

ALEXANDER POPE

(1688-1744)

AN important name in the history of English Poetry, though not regarded as a very great poet. Chiefly famous for his *Satires*, written in rhymed couplets, such as those he uses in the *Elegy* below.

(I) *SOI TIUDE*

Happy the man, whose wish and care
A few paternal acres bound,
Content to breathe his native air
In his own ground.

Whose herds with milk, whose fields with bread, 5
Whose flocks supply him with attire,
Whose trees in summer yield him shade,
In winter fire.

Blest, who can unconcern'dly find
Hours, days, and years, slide soft away 10
In health of body, peace of mind,
Quiet by day,

Sound sleep by night ; study and ease
Together mixt, sweet recreation,
And innocence, which most does please 15
With meditation.

Thus let me live, unseen, unknown :
 Thus unlamented let me die ;
 Steal from the world, and not a stone
 Tell where I lie.

20

NOTES

- L 1 **Happy** is the man.
 L 2 **Paternal acres**—*i.e.* land inherited from his father
 subject of the relative sentence
 L 4 **Whose herds** supply him **with milk**, etc
 L 9 **Blest** is he
 Unconcern'dly—untroubled in mind
 L 14 **Together mixt**—predicate after " can find "
 L 15 **Which most doth please with**—which is most pleasing
 when combined with
 L 19 Let me **steal**.
 Stone—tomb stone

(II) *FROM THE "ELEGY TO THE MEMORY OF
 AN UNFORTUNATE LADY"*

What can atone (O ever-injured shade !)
 Thy fate unpitied, and thy rites unpaid ?
 No friend's complaint, no kind domestic tear
 Pleased thy pale ghost, or graced thy mournful bier.
 By foreign hands thy dying eyes were closed, 5
 By foreign hands thy decent limbs composed,
 By foreign hands thy humble grave adorn'd,
 By strangers honour'd, and by strangers mourn'd.
 What tho' no friends in sable weeds appear,
 Grieve for an hour, perhaps, then mourn a year, 10
 And bear about the mockery of woe
 To midnight dances, and the public show ?

36 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

What tho' no weeping Loves thy ashes grace,
 Nor polish'd marble emulate thy face ?
 What tho' no sacred earth allow thee room, 15
 Nor hallow'd dirge be mutter'd o'er thy tomb ?
 Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be drest,
 And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast :
 There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,
 There the first roses of the year shall blow ; 20
 While angels with their silver wings o'ershade
 The ground now sacred by thy reliques made.

So peaceful rests, without a stone, a name,
 What once had beauty, titles, wealth, and fame.
 How loved, how honour'd once, avails thee not, 25
 To whom related, or by whom begot ;
 A heap of dust alone remains of thee,
 'Tis all thou art, and all the proud shall be !

Poets themselves must fall, like those they sung,
 Deaf the praised ear, and mute the tuneful tongue. 30
 Ev'n he, whose soul now melts in mournful lays,
 Shall shortly want the gen'rous tear he pays ;
 Then from his closing eyes thy form shall part,
 And the last pang shall tear thee from his heart ;
 Life's idle business at one gasp be o'er, 35
 The Muse forgot, and thou beloved no more !

NOTES

- L. 1 **Shade**—ghost, spirit of the departed
Ever-injured—whose wrongs will always remain.
 L. 3. **Domestic**—from thy own home.
Decent—probably a "classical" trick, the adjective used
 with the noun instead of the adverb, "decently,"
 with the verb. Compare "casual" on p. 67, L. 3.
 L. 9. **Weeds**—mourning clothes.

- L 11. **The mockery of woe**—make a mockery of their mourning dresses by wearing them at dances and other amusements
- L 13 **No weeping Loves**—no symbolic images of Love weeping over thy remains adorn thy tomb
- L 14 **Nor polish'd marble**—no polished marble sculpture reproduces thy features
- L 15 The ground in which she was buried had not been consecrated, as is usual in Christian burial
- L 22 The ground is, however, now made sacred by her remains
- L 23 **Without a stone or a name.**
- L 24 **What**—a body which
- L 25 **Avails thee not**—these questions are of no help to thee
- L 30 The poet's ear that so often heard praise of himself must become deaf
- L 31 *is* the present poet
- L 32 **Want**—be without
- Ls 35, 36 Shall be **over**, shall be **forgot**, shalt be **beloved no more.**
- L 36 **The Muse**—Poetry, literally, the ancient Greek goddess of poetry

THOMAS GRAY

(1716-1771)

GRAY's *Elegy* is probably, in proportion to its size, the most quoted work in the whole of English literature, not even excepting the Bible. Nearly every stanza contains a line or a phrase that is in constant use. Gray also wrote *Odes* in the classical Greek style.

ELEGY WRITTEN IN A COUNTRY CHURCHYARD

The curfew tolls the knell of parting day,
The lowing herd wind slowly o'er the lea,
The ploughman homeward plods his weary way,
And leaves the world to darkness and to me.

Now fades the glimmering landscape on the sight, 5
And all the air a solemn stillness holds,
Save where the beetle wheels his droning flight,
And drowsy tinklings lull the distant folds :

Save that from yonder ivy-mantled tower
The moping owl does to the moon complain 10
Of such as, wandering near her secret bower,
Molest her ancient solitary reign.

Beneath those rugged elms, that yew-tree's shade
Where heaves the turf in many a mouldering heap,
Each in his narrow cell for ever laid, 15
The rude forefathers of the hamlet sleep.

The breezy call of incense-breathing morn,
The swallow twittering from the straw-built shed,
The cock's shrill clarion, or the echoing horn,
No more shall rouse them from their lowly bed. 20

For them no more the blazing hearth shall burn
Or busy housewife ply her evening care :
No children run to lisp their sire's return,
Or climb his knees the envied kiss to share.

Oft did the harvest to their sickle yield, 25
Their furrow oft the stubborn glebe has broke ;
How jocund did they drive their team afield !
How bow'd the woods beneath their sturdy stroke !

Let not ambition mock their useful toil,
Their homely joys, and destiny obscure ; 30
Nor grandeur hear with a disdainful smile
The short and simple annals of the poor.

The boast of heraldry, the pomp of power,
And all that beauty, all that wealth e'er gave,
Awaits alike th' inevitable hour :— 35
The paths of glory lead but to the grave.

Nor you, ye proud, impute to these the fault
If memory o'er their tomb no trophies raise,
Where through the long-drawn aisle and fretted vault
The pealing anthem swells the note of praise. 40

Can storied urn or animated bust
Back to its mansion call the fleeting breath ?
Can honour's voice provoke the silent dust,
Or flattery soothe the dull cold ear of death ?

40 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

Perhaps in this neglected spot is laid 45
Some heart once pregnant with celestial fire ;
Hands, that the rod of empire might have sway'd,
Or waked to ecstasy the living lyre :

But knowledge to their eyes her ample page,
Rich with the spoils of time, did ne'er unroll ; 50
Chill penury repress'd their noble rage,
And froze the genial current of the soul.

Full many a gem of purest ray serene
The dark unfathom'd caves of ocean bear :
Full many a flower is born to blush unseen, 55
And waste its sweetness on the desert air.

Some village Hampden, that with dauntless breast
The little tyrant of his fields withstood,
Some mute inglorious Milton here may rest,
Some Cromwell guiltless of his country's blood. 60

Th' applause of list'ning senates to command,
The threats of pain and ruin to despise,
To scatter plenty o'er a smiling land,
And read their history in a nation's eyes

Their lot forbade : nor circumscribed alone 65
Their growing virtues, but their crimes confined ;
Forbade to wade thro' slaughter to a throne,
And shut the gates of mercy on mankind ;

The struggling pangs of conscious truth to hide,
To quench the blushes of ingenuous shame, 70
Or heap the shrine of luxury and pride
With incense kindled at the Muse's flame.

Far from the madding crowd's ignoble strife
Their sober wishes never learn'd to stray ;
Along the cool sequester'd vale of life 75
They kept the noiseless tenour of their way.

Yet e'en these bones from insult to protect
Some frail memorial still erected nigh,
With uncouth rhymes and shapeless sculpture deck'd,
Implores the passing tribute of a sigh. 80

Their name, their years, spelt by th' unletter'd Muse,
The place of fame and elegy supply :
And many a holy text around she strows,
That teach the rustic moralist to die.

For who, to dumb forgetfulness a prey, 85
This pleasing anxious being e'er resign'd,
Left the warm precincts of the cheerful day,
Nor cast one longing ling'ring look behind ?

On some fond breast the parting soul relies,
Some pious drops the closing eye requires ; 90
E'en from the tomb the voice of nature cries,
E'en in our ashes live their wonted fires.

For thee, who, mindful of th' unhonour'd dead,
Dost in these lines their artless tale relate ;
If chance, by lonely contemplation led, 95
Some kindred spirit shall enquire thy fate,—

Haply some hoary-headed swain may say,
“ Oft have we seen him at the peep of dawn
Brushing with hasty steps the dews away,
To meet the sun upon the upland lawn ; 100

42 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

" There at the foot of yonder nodding beech
That wreathes its old fantastic roots so high,
His listless length at noon-tide would he stretch,
And pore upon the brook that babbles by.

“ Hard by yon wood, now smiling as in scorn, 105
Muttering his wayward fancies he would rove ;
Now drooping, woeful-wan, like one forlorn,
Or crazed with care, or cross'd in hopeless love.

" One morn I missed him on the custom'd hill,
Along the heath, and near his favourite tree ; 110
Another came ; nor yet beside the rill,
Nor up the lawn, nor at the wood was he ;

" The next with dirges due in sad array
Slow through the church-way path we saw him
 borne,—
Approach and read (for thou canst read) the lay 115
Graved on the stone beneath yon aged thorn."

THE EPITAPH

Here rests his head upon the lap of earth
A youth, to fortune and to fame unknown ;
Fair Science frown'd not on his humble birth,
And Melancholy mark'd him for her own. 120

Large was his bounty, and his soul sincere ;
Heaven did a recompense as largely send :
He gave to Misery (all he had) a tear,
He gain'd from Heaven ('twas all he wished) a friend.

No farther seek his merits to disclose,
Or draw his frailties from their dread abode,
(There they alike in trembling hope repose,)
The bosom of his Father and his God.

NOTES

- L. 1 **Curfew, knell**—see dictionary
L. 2 **Wind**—make their way in a curved irregular course
L. 7 **Wheels his flight**—flies in a circle, more or less. The intransitive use, "wheels in his flight," would be more usual
L. 8 **Tinklings**—of the bells worn by the sheep in the folds
Lull—soothe to sleep
Notice the transposition of adjectives. It is really the *folds* (i.e. the sheep) that are "drowsy." Similarly above it is more properly the *ploughman* that is "weary," and the *beeble* that is "droning"
L. 9 **Ivy-mantled**—covered with the ivy that often overgrows ruins in England
Ls 10 12 A poetic but of course inaccurate, explanation of the owl's cry
L. 12 **Ancient solitary reign**—the rule over the ruined tower which she has enjoyed alone for so long
L. 13 **Those, that**—indicating the trees surrounding the churchyard, which was always used as a cemetery in past times
L. 18 **Straw-built**—Properly not *built* of straw, but *roofed* with straw, i.e. "thatched"
L. 19 **Horn**—of huntsmen
L. 23 **Lisp**—speak in childish accents about
L. 26 **Glebe**—earth, object of "has broke," the "furrow" being made by the plough
L. 29 **Ambition** } abstract for concrete, "ambitious men,"
L. 31 **Grandeur** } "great people"
L. 33 **Heraldry**—the "crests" and "coats of arms" used nowadays as family marks by men of good birth dating back to the days of Chivalry, when their ancestors used such "crests" and "coats of arms" literally for making themselves recognisable in battle, owing to their faces being covered by iron armour. So here the word amounts merely to "nobility of birth"

44 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

- L 38 **Memory**—abstract for concrete again
- Ls 39, 40 Allusion to the splendid tombs erected to great men *inside* churches where the singing of the worshippers ("anthem") echoes ("pealing," "swells") down the long side sections ("long drawn aisles") and ornamented under roof ("fretted vault") of the building (All these terms should be looked up in a dictionary) This stanza is to be contrasted with the fourth stanza The poor must not be blamed or despised for not preserving the memory of their ancestors by fine tombs
- L 41 **Storied urn**—such tombs often have carved on them an urn, such as was used in classical times for preserving the ashes of the dead, with the "story" of the dead man's life inscribed on it
- Animated**—life like For *bust*, see dictionary
- L 43 **Honour's voice**—expressions of the honour due to the dead
- Provoke**—rouse Literally "call forth" (see derivation in dictionary)
- L 44 **Death**—the dead, not personification here
- L 45 **This spot**—the churchyard with its simple graves
- L 46 **Some heart**—a man inspired with heavenly wisdom
- L 47 A man who might have become an emperor
- L 48 A man who might have been a great poet
The *lyre* was the musical instrument with which the Greeks accompanied their *lyrical* or "sung" poetry
- L 50 **Spoils**—here "collected treasures"
- Unroll**—ancient books were in the form of rolls of paper or parchment
- L 51 **Rage**—here in a good sense, "emotion" "enthusiasm"
- L 52 The metaphor is that of a stream being stopped from running by frost
- L 53 **Of purest ray serene**—of purest and clearest brilliance
Just as there are gems hidden in the ocean and flowers unnoticed in the desert, so there may have been men in this village who never had an opportunity to show their greatness
- L 57 John **Hampden** was largely responsible for the beginning of the Civil War (XVIIth century) by resisting the illegal demands of Charles I Similarly one of these "rude forefathers" buried here may have resisted the local tyranny of some land owner

- L. 59 **Some mute inglorious Milton** one of them may have had as great poetic gifts as Milton, but remained silent and without fame through lack of opportunity
- L. 60 **Some Cromwell** one of them may have been as great in character as Oliver Cromwell, who led the Parliamentary party against Charles I, but, unlike him, free from the guilt of having plunged his country into civil war
- Ls 61-64 The stanza summarises the privileges enjoyed by a statesman *The applause* is the object of *to command*, (*i.e.* to secure), and all four verbs, *command*, *despise*, *scatter*, and *read*, are dependent on "Their lot forbade" (L 65)
- Ls 65-72 Their fortune prevented them from doing these fine things, but also saved them from opportunities of committing great political or public wickedness (Ls 67, 68), from being hypocrites (L 69), or shameless (L 70) or from doing a sort of worship to luxurious and proud men (L 71), by addressing flattering verses to them (L 72)
- The Muse** was the Greek goddess of poetry and literature. Such classical ideas were very fashionable in Gray's time
- L 73 **Far**—being far from
Madding—rare for "maddening"
- L 80 **Implores**—the inscription on this simple memorial invites the passer by to pay respect to the dead by a sigh at least
- L 81 **Th' unletter'd Muse**—cf L 72. Here the goddess supposed to have inspired the writer of the inscription is assumed to be unlettered *i.e.* not very learned and so just a plain statement of the name and age of the dead man takes the place of the poem in praise of him that would be found on a richer tomb
- L 83 **Many a holy text**—texts from the Bible are also added on the inscription, to encourage the simple villagers ('rustic') to face death philosophically ('moralist')
- L 85 **To dumb forgetfulness a prey**—having been seized by the silence and forgetfulness of death
- L 86 **This pleasing anxious being**—this pleasing, though anxious, life
- L 88 **Nor cast**—without casting. Every person who dies feels some regret at leaving this life

46 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

L. 90 The dying man expects at least someone to weep for him.

Ls 91, 92 And so the natural clinging to life is expressed in the inscription on even the simplest tombs.

L. 93 **For thee**—the poet addresses himself

L. 95 **If chance**—if it should chance that

L. 98 The following lines give the poet's imaginary picture of what the "swains" (poetical for "rustics") observed of him

L. 100 **Lawn**—poetic use for "grassy place" of *any* sort

L. 102 The roots of the beech tree stand up above the ground, wreathed (*i.e.* twisted) into fantastic shapes

L. 105 **Hard by**—close by

Smiling—the poet, of course

L. 107 **Woeful-wan**—a word made up for the occasion, "woefully wan," terribly pale

L. 109 **Custom'd**—poetic for "accustomed"

L. 111 **Another morn came.**

L. 115. (**For thou canst read**)—implying that the "hoary-headed swain," who is giving this account of the poet to the stranger, cannot do so

Lay—properly "song" and so "poem"

L. 116 **Thorn**—hawthorn-tree

L. 119 **Science frown'd not**—though of humble birth he was not without education "Science literally means "knowledge"

Ls 121-122 **Large, largely**—in the less common sense of "generous"

L. 123 **Misery**—abstract for concrete, "those who were miserable"

L. 127 **In trembling hope**—of forgiveness

WILLIAM COWPER

WELL known, but not a great poet. The poem below is interesting, however, in two ways: that it represents the *anapaestic* metre that was beginning to be popular in his time: and that Alexander Selkirk was the man whose adventures Defoe had used as the basis of his famous story of *Robinson Crusoe*.

I am monarch of all I survey ;
My right there is none to dispute ;
From the centre all round to the sea
I am lord of the fowl and the brute.
O Solitude ! where are the charms
That sages have seen in thy face ?
Better dwell in the midst of alarms,
Than reign in this horrible place.

48 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

Society, Friendship, and Love
 Divinely bestow'd upon man,
 Oh, had I the wings of a dove
 How soon would I taste you again 20
 My sorrows I then might assuage
 In the ways of religion and truth,
 Might learn from the wisdom of age,
 And be cheer'd by the sallies of youth.

Ye winds that have made me your sport, 25
 Convey to this desolate shore
 Some cordial endearing report
 Of a land I shall visit no more :
 My friends, do they now and then send
 A wish or a thought after me ? 30
 O tell me I yet have a friend,
 Though a friend I am never to see.

How fleet is a glance of the mind !
 Compared with the speed of its flight,
 The tempest itself lags behind, 35
 And the swift-winged arrows of light.
 When I think of my own native land
 In a moment I seem to be there ;
 But alas ! recollection at hand
 Soon hurries me back to despair. 40

But the sca-fowl is gone to her nest,
 The beast is laid down in his lair ;
 Even here is a season of rest,
 And I to my cabin repair.

WILLIAM COWPER

49

There's mercy in every place,
And mercy, encouraging thought !
Gives even affliction a grace
And reconciles man to his lot.

45

NOTES

- L. 3. **Centre**—of the island on which he had been cast away.
L. 4. **The fowl and the brute**—singular of " class," " the
birds and the beasts."
L. 10. **My journey**—of life.

WILLIAM BLAKE

(1757-1827)

A MYSTICAL poet and artist. His poem on *The Tiger* is probably more famous than intelligible, even to the average English reader.

THE TIGER

~~T~~Tiger, tiger, burning bright
In the forests of the night,
What immortal hand or eye
Could frame thy fearful symmetry ?
In what distant deeps or skies 5
Burnt the fire of thine eyes ?
On what wings dare he aspire ?
What the hand dare seize the fire ?
And what shoulder and what art
Could twist the sinews of thy heart ? 10
And, when thy heart began to beat,
What dread hand and what dread feet ?
What the hammer ? What the chain ?
In what furnace was thy brain ?
What the anvil ? What dread grasp 15
Dare its deadly terrors clasp ?
When the stars threw down their spears,
And water'd heaven with their tears,
Did He smile His work to see ?
Did He who made the lamb make thee ? 20

Tiger, tiger, burning bright
 In the forests of the night,
 What immortal hand or eye
 Dare frame thy fearful symmetry ?

NOTES

- L 1 **Burning**—metaphorical of its bright colour
- L 2 **Of the night**—"dark as night" or, perhaps, "at night"
- L 3 In the series of questions that follows, the poet marvels how God made such a wonderful beast as the tiger
- L 5 **Deeps**—deep places of the earth, where volcanic fire might be found
- L 6 **The fire of**—i.e. the fire with which He made
- L 7 **On what wings**—what wonderful wings they must have been on which He dared to fly up to the stars to secure such fire
- L 8 **What the hand**—what a hand it must have been that dared to seize it
- L 9 **Shoulder**—here stands for "strength of arm"
- L 10 **Twist the sinews**—in the process of making it. The metaphors of a workman are intended to suggest what a wonderful work of art "the tiger's body is"
- L 12 The sentence is not completed. How awful must have been the hands and feet of the "workman" (God) which proceeded with the making of its body
- Is 13 16 What was the machinery that God used in such a task ?
- What dread grasp**—how awful must have been the grasp that dared handle the terrible brain of the tiger
- L 17 **Throw down their spears**—the stars are here thought of as armed angels, throwing down their weapons and breaking into tears at the sight of the terrible new thing God had created
- L 20 Did the same Creator make two such contrasted animals as the lamb and the tiger ?

(II) *LUCY*

She dwelt among the untrodden ways
 Beside the springs of Dove ;
 A maid whom there were none to praise,
 And very few to love.

A violet by a mossy stone 5
 Half-hidden from the eye !
 —Fair as a star, when only one
 Is shining in the sky.

She lived unknown, and few could know 10
 When Lucy ceased to be ;
 But she is in her grave, and, oh,
 The difference to me !

NOTES

- L 1 **Untrodden**—i.e. unfrequented
 L 2 **Dove**—a river in Derbyshire
 Ls. 3, 4 Owing to lack of neighbours, not to lack of merit
 L. 5. **A violet**—she was like a violet, etc., a small and inconspicuous but very sweet scented flower, a favourite symbol with English poets for retiring modesty
 L 9. **Few could know**—i.e. few could have heard of her death.

(III) *LUCY*

Three years she grew in sun and shower ;
 Then Nature said, " A lovelier flower
 On earth was never sown :
 This child I to myself will take ;
 She shall be mine, and I will make 5
 A lady of my own.

54 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

" Myself will to my darling be
Both law and impulse : and with me
The girl, in rock and plain,
In earth and heaven, in glade and bower, 10
Shall feel an overseeing power
To kindle or restrain.

" She shall be sportive as the fawn
That wild with glee across the lawn
Or up the mountain springs ; 15
And hers shall be the breathing balm,
And hers the silence and the calm
Of mute insensate things.

" The floating clouds their state shall lend
To her ; for her the willow bend ; 20
Nor shall she fail to see
Even in the motions of the storm
Grace that shall mould the maiden's form
By silent sympathy.

" The stars of midnight shall be dear 25
To her ; and she shall lean her ear
In many a secret place
Where rivulets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murmuring sound
Shall pass into her face. 30

" And vital feelings of delight
Shall rear her form to stately height,
Her virgin bosom swell ;
Such thoughts to Lucy I will give
While she and I together live 35
Here in this happy dell."

Thus Nature spake—The work was done—
 How soon my Lucy's race was run !
 She died, and left to me
 This heath, this calm and quiet scene 40
 The memory of what has been,
 And never more will be.

NOTES

A description of Lucy's education This emphasis on the spiritual influences of Nature is very distinctive of Wordsworth's poetry

- L 8. **Both law and impulse**—i.e. she shall learn both moral law and religious aspiration from her natural objects in the beautiful country around the
 L 13 The deer shall teach her how to play
 L 16 Gentleness and calmness of character shall be taught her by the things around her that have no voice or feeling
 L 20 **For her the willow bend**—the willow shall provide, like the clouds and the storm, lessons in bodily grace The willow is a favourite symbol for graceful bending
 L 38 **Race was run**—a common metaphor for the course of life

(IV) *ENGLAND*, 1802

O Friend ! I know not which way I must look
 For comfort, being, as I am, opprest
 To think that now our life is only drest
 For show ; mean handy-work of craftsman, cook,
 Or groom !—We must run glittering like a brook 5
 In the open sunshine, or we are unblest ;
 The wealthiest man among us is the best :
 No grandeur now in nature or in book

56 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

Delights us. Rapine, avarice, expense,
 This is idolatry ; and these we adore : 10
 Plain living and high thinking are no more
 The homely beauty of the good old cause
 Is gone ; our peace, our fearful innocence,
 And pure religion breathing household laws.

NOTES

England, 1802—in this year England had concluded a temporary peace with Napoleon, and the respite from the long strain of war had resulted in an outburst of luxury and selfishness. This poem is a "Sonnet"—see Note at end of book.

- L. 4 **Mean handy-work**—our life is a mean product of materialism. Manufactures, food, horses are all that we think about.
- L. 6 **Or we are unblest**—we feel we are unfortunate unless we can make a show in public like a glittering brook.
- L. 10. **This . . . these.** "Rapine," seizing money, "avarice," hoarding money, and "expense," wasting money, are all aspects of *one* thing, love of money, which is idolatry hence "this." And we practically worship *each* of them hence "these."
- L. 12 **The good old cause**—"cause" is here used in the sense of the principles which one supports, in this case peace, innocence, and religion.
- L. 13. **Fearful innocence**—innocence accompanied by proper dread of evil.
- L. 14 **Breathing household laws**—inspiring us with high morality in our homes.

(V) THE WORLD

The World is too much with us ; late and soon,
 Getting and spending, we lay waste our powers ;
 Little we see in Nature that is ours ;
 We have given our hearts away, a sordid boon !

This sea that bares her bosom to the moon, 5
 The winds that will be howling at all hours
 And are up-gather'd now like sleeping flowers
 For this, for everything, we are out of tune
 It moves us not —Great God ! I'd rather be
 A Pagan suckled in a creed outworn,— 10
 So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
 Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn ;
 Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea ;
 Or hear old Triton blow his wreathéd horn.

NOTES

Another "Sonnet," and a famous denunciation of "civilised" materialism as contrasted with the spiritual influences of Nature

L 1 **Soon**—early

L 3 We recognise no human interests in Nature

L 4 **Given our hearts away**—to 'the World' and are without true feelings in consequence Compare L 9, "It moves us not"

A sordid boon—i.e. our hearts are so mean that they are hardly worth giving to *anything*

L 8 **Out of tune**—out of "harmony," or better "concord," which is itself derived from the Latin for 'heart,' and a common term in music

L 10 **A Pagan**—literally a mere "countryman," one who knows nothing of any of the great religions

Suckled—brought up from childhood

Creed outworn—an out of date religion here he is thinking of the religion of the ancient Greeks, which, however poor, at least made them see Gods and Goddesses in the objects of Nature

L 13 **Proteus** was the Greek sea god, who took many shapes, just as the sea does

L 14. **Triton** was another sea god in Greek mythology, generally represented as blowing a conch or trumpet of shell

SIR WALTER SCOTT

(1771-1832)

AUTHOR not only of the famous *Waverley Novels*, but also of long poems on Scottish life and history, such as *The Lady of the Lake*, which are stories in themselves, and of many well-known smaller poems.

(I) *PATRIOTISM*,

Breathes there the man with soul so dead,
Who never to himself hath said,
 " This is my own, my native land ! "
Whose heart hath ne'er within him burn'd
As home his footsteps he hath turn'd
 From wandering on a foreign strand ?
If such there breathe, go, mark him well
For him no Minstrel raptures swell ;
High though his titles, proud his name,
Boundless his wealth as wish can claim
Despite those titles, power, and pelf,
The wretch, concentr'd all in self,
Living, shall forfeit fair renown,
And, doubly dying, shall go down
To the vile dust from whence he sprung, 15
Unwept, unhonour'd, and unsung.

NOTES

- L. 6. **Strand**—" shore " and so " country," a common poetical use of part for whole.

- L. 8. **Minstrel raptures**—"raptures of minstrels," *i.e.* praises by poets. Minstrels were the wandering musicians and singers in Europe of the Middle Ages.
- L. 12. **Concentred**—poetical form: prose would be "concentrated on himself." See derivation in dictionary.
- L. 14. **Doubly dying**—not only his body, but his name too shall die.
- L. 16. **Unsung**—compare L. 8.

(II) *GATHERING SONG OF DONALD THE BLACK*

Pibroch of Donuil Dhu,
 Pibroch of Donuil,
 Wake thy wild voice anew,
 Summon Clan Conuil.
 Come away, come away, 5
 Hark to the summons !
 Come in your war-array,
 Gentles and commons.

Come from deep glen, and
 From mountain so rocky 10
 The war-pipe and pennon
 Are at Inverlöcky.
 Come every hill-plaid, and
 True heart that wears one,
 Come every steel blade, and 15
 Strong hand that bears one.

Leave untended the herd,
 The flock without shelter ;
 Leave the corpse uninterr'd,
 The bride at the altar ; 20

60 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

Leave the deer, leave the steer,
Leave nets and barges :
Come with your fighting gear.
Broadwords and targets.

Come as the winds come, when
Forests are rënded,
Come as the wáves come, when
Navics are stranded :
Faster come, fáster come,
Faster and faster,
Chief, vassal, page and groom,
Tenant and master.

Fast they come, fast they come ;
 See how they gather !
 Wide waves the eagle plume ' 35
 Blended with heather.
 Cast your plaids, draw your blades,
 Forward each man set !
 Pibroch of Dónuill Dhu, ' 40
 Knell for the onset !

NOTES

Gathering Song—of the Highland tribes of Scotland, who play a large part in Scott's writings.

- L. 1. **Pibroch**—the war-music of the Scottish bagpipes.
Donnìl Dhu—is the Gaelic (Highland language) for Donald the Black.
L. 4. **Clan**—The Scottish name for a "tribe" or "family."
L. 8. **Gentles and commons**—gentlemen and common folk.
L. 11. **Pennon**—properly the narrow flag attached to a lance, but here equivalent to "standard" or "flag" in general.

- L. 12. **Inverlocky**—the name of the place of gathering.
- L. 13 **Hill-plaid**—the plaid is the thick woollen shawl worn by the Highlanders. Each Clan has a special pattern or "tartan" for its plaids.
- L. 17 All ordinary work is to be left at once on the summons to war.
- L. 20. **The altar**—*i.e.* even if the marriage party are already in the church and the ceremony about to be performed.
- L. 26 **Rended**—poetic license for "rent."
- L. 36 **Blended with heather**—sprigs of the heather, the shrubby plant that covers most of the Scottish hills, are mixed with the eagle's feathers that they wear in their hats or "bonnets."
- L. 40 **Knell**—properly of a bell, sounding for a funeral so here of the bagpipes sounding solemnly.

(III) *CORONACH*.

He is gone on the mountain,
 He is lost to the forest,
 Like a summer-dried fountain,
 When our need was the sorest.
 The font reappearing 5
 From the raindrops shall borrow,
 But to us comes no cheering;
 To Duncan no morrow!

The hand of the reaper
 Takes the ears that are hoary, 10
 But the voice of the weeper
 Wails manhood in glory.
 The autumn winds rushing
 Waft the leaves that are searest,
 But our flower was in flushing 15
 When blighting was nearest.

62 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

Fleet foot on the cor̄rei,
 Sage coun̄sel in cumber,
 Red hand in the foray,
 How sound is thy slumber ! 20
 Like the dew on the moun̄tain,
 Like the foam on the river,
 Like the bubble on the fountain,
 Thou art gone ; and for ēver !

NOTES

Coronach—Gaelic for " A Lament for the Dead "

L 5 **The font**—*t e* the fountain or spring

Ls 9 16 Corn is reaped when ripe, leaves fall when they have withered but Duncan was cut off in the prime of manhood, like a flower plucked ' in flushung,' an unusual expression for " in bloom "

L. 13 **Watt** away

Searest—see dictionary for " sere," the more usual spelling

Ls. 17, 18 **Correi, cumber**—Scottish words for "covert" and "trouble"

L 19 **Red**—*t e* with killing

L 20 **Thy**—*t e* Duncan s

SAMUEL TAYLOR COLERIDGE

(1772-1834)

His *Rime of the Ancient Mariner* is his most famous poem, but too long to insert here. His friendship with Wordsworth and Southey produced a revolutionary change in the form and spirit of English poetry.

KURLA KHAN

In Xanadu did Kubla Khan
A stately pleasurc-dome decree :
Where Alph, the sacred river, ran
Through caverns measureless to man
Down to a sunless sea. 5
So twice five miles of fertile ground
With walls and towers were girdled round :
And there were gardens bright with sinuous rills
Where blossom'd many an incense-bearing tree ;
And here were forests ancient as the hills, 10
Enfolding sunny spots of greenery.

But oh ! that deep romantic chasm which slanted
Down the green hill athwart a cedarn cover !
A savage place ! as holy and enchanted
As e'er beneath a waning moon was haunted 15
By woman wailing for her demon-lover !
And from this chasm, with ceaseless turmoil scething,
As if this earth in fast thick pants were breathing,

64 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

A mighty fountain momentarily was forced :
 Amid whose swift half-intermitted burst 20
 Huge fragments vaulted like rebounding hail,
 Or chaffy grain beneath the thresher's flail :
 And 'mid these dancing rocks at once and ever
 It flung up momentarily the sacred river.
 Five miles meandering with a mazy motion 25
 Through wood and dale the sacred river ran,
 Then reach'd the caverns measureless to man,
 And sank in tumult to a lifeless ocean :
 And 'mid this tumult Kubla heard from far
 Ancestral voices prophesying war ! 30

The shadow of the dome of pleasure
 Floated midway on the waves ;
 Where was heard the mingled measure
 From the fountain and the caves.
 It was a miracle of rare device, 35
 A sunny pleasure-dome with caves of ice !

A damsel with a dulcimer
 In a vision once I saw :
 It was an Abyssinian maid,
 And on her dulcimer she play'd, 40
 Singing of Mount Abora.
 Could I revive within me
 Her symphony and song,
 To such a deep delight 'twould win me
 That with music loud and long, 45
 I would build that dome in air,
 That sunny dome ! those caves of ice !
 And all who heard should see them there,

And all should cry, Beware ! Beware !
 His flashing eyes, his floating hair ! 50
 Weave a circle round him thrice,
 And close your eyes with holy dread,
 For he on honey-dew hath fed,
 And drunk the milk of Paradise.

NOTES

Coleridge describes this poem as the fragment of a dream-vision—perhaps an opium dream?—which composed itself in his mind when he had fallen asleep after reading a few lines about “the Khan Kubla” in an old book of travels

- L 1 **Xanadu**—Kubla Khan’s legendary capital, in China
 L 2 **Decree**—order to be built
 L 3 **Alph**—a legendary river, not identifiable in actual geography
 Ls 8 and 10 **There, here**—in one direction, in another direction
 L 13 **Cover**—or “covert”, the chasm or gorge lay across a wood of cedar trees
 L 16 **Demon-lover**—an allusion to Eastern legends where the woman finds that her lover was a demon, and seeks for him in places such as this chasm
 L 19 **Momently**—every moment. An uncommon word, and not the same as *momentarily*, “for a moment”
 L 21 **Fragments**—of rock
Vaulted—leapt up
 L 22 **Thresher’s flail**—the old English method of threshing corn was not to trample out the grain with the help of oxen as in the East but to beat it out with a flail (see dictionary)
 L 28 **Lifeless ocean**—the “sunless sea” of L 5. Apparently a subterranean lake is meant
 L 30 **Ancestral voices**—his imagination interpreted thus the roar of the river
 L 31 **The dome of pleasure**—see L 2
 L 32 **Midway on the waves**—i.e. in the middle of the river

66 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

- L 33 **Measure**—poetical for “music” Compare the literal meaning of “metre”
- L 37 **Dulcimer**—a kind of musical instrument no longer in use except in poetry
- L 39. **Abyssinian**—Kubla Khan had nothing to do with Abyssinia or with the legendary “Mount Abora” These touches are characteristic of the dream from which the poem came.
- L 43 **Symphony**—see dictionary Here = “music”
- L 48 His “music loud and long” would cause his hearers to see the building so vividly in their imagination that they would call him a magician
- L 51 **Weave a circle**—to draw a circle round a person is a common detail in Magic
Thrice—the number three is also often connected with Magic
- Ls 53, 54 **Honey-dew, milk of Paradise**—poetical ideas of magical food that produces divine inspiration
“Honey dew” is really a sweet sticky substance produced by insects on the leaves of plants

68 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

' } My hopes are with the Dead { anon
 My place with them will be, 20
 And I with them shall travel on
 Through all Futurity ;
 Yet leaving here a name, I trust,
 That will not perish in the dust.

NOTES

The main thought of this poem might be usefully compared with that of Ruskin in *King's Treasures*

L. 3. **Casual**—properly “casually,” qualifying “cast” : compare Note on “**Decent**,” p 36.

L. 7. **Weal**—welfare or well being : a rare word except in the phrases “in weal or woe” and “the common weal.”

L. 19 **Anon**—soon.

CHARLES LAMB

(1775-1834)

FAMOUS as an essayist, but one of his rare poems is included here to illustrate an unusual form of metre.

THE OLD FAMILIAR FACES

I have had playmates, I have had companions,
In my days of childhood, in my joyful school-days ;
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have been laughing, I have been carousing,
Drinking late, sitting late, with my bosom cronies : 5
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I loved a Love once, fairest among women :
Closed are her doors on me, I must not see her—
All, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

I have a friend, a kinder friend has no man : 10
Like an ingrate, I left my friend abruptly ;
Left him, to muse on the old familiar faces.

Ghost-like I paced round the haunts of my childhood,
Earth seem'd a desert I was bound to traverse,
Seeking to find the old familiar faces. 15

Friend of my bosom, thou more than a brother,
Why wert not thou born in my father's dwelling ?
So might we talk of the old familiar faces,

70 REPRESENTATIVE ENGLISH POETRY

How some they have died, and some they have left me,
And ¹some are taken from me ; all are departed ; 20
Ah, all are gone, the old familiar faces.

NOTES

- L. 5. **Bosom cronies**—rather colloquial for “ friends of one’s heart.”
- L. 11. **Ingrate**—ungrateful person.
- L. 17. He wishes that the friend of later life had been a real brother, for he would thus have had the same memories of childhood to share with him

THOMAS CAMPBELL

(1777-1844)

AUTHOR of *Ye Mariners of England* and several other still well-known poems. The following is included on account of its remarkable metrical resemblance to an Urdu *Ghasal* form.

HOHENLINDEN

On Linden, when the sun was low,
All bloodless lay the untrodden snow ;
And dark as winter was the flow
Of Iser, rolling rapidly.

But Linden saw another sight, 5
When the drum beat at dead of night
Commanding fires of death to light
The darkness of her scenery.

By torch and trumpet fast array'd
Each horseman drew his battle-blade, 10
And furious every charger neigh'd
To join the dreadful revelry.

Then shook the hills with thunder riven ;
Then rush'd the steed, to battle driven ;
And louder than the bolts of Heaven 15
Far flash'd the red artillery.

But redder yet that light shall glow
 On Linden's hills of stained snow ;
 And bloodier yet the torrent flow
 Of Iser, rolling rapidly. 20

'Tis morn ; but scarce yon level sun
 Can pierce the war-clouds rolling dun,
 Where furious Frank and fiery Hun
 Shout in their sulphurous canopy.

The combat deepens. On, ye Brave 25
 Who rush to glory, or the grave !
 Wave, Munich ! all thy banners wave,
 And charge with all thy chivalry !

Few, few shall part, where many meet !
 The snow shall be their winding-sheet, 30
 And every turf beneath their feet
 Shall be a soldier's sepulchre.

NOTES

Hohenlinden means " High Limetrees." The battle was fought near Munich in Germany on 2nd December, 1800, between the Austrians and the French, during the wars that followed the French Revolution.

L. 4. **Iser**—the river Iser.

L. 9. **By torch and trumpet**—by signal-fires and trumpet-calls.

L. 13. **Riven**—the hills were " split " with the thunder of the guns.

L. 15. **Bolts of Heaven**—thunder-bolts.

L. 21. **Level sun**—*i.e.* it is still only a little way above the horizon and on a level with the battle.

L. 22. **War-clouds rolling dun**—the brown rolling clouds of battle-smoke.

- L 23 **Frank and Hun**—of the Gothic tribes that overran the Roman Empire from the fifth century onwards, the Franks gave their name to France and the Huns theirs to Hungary, which was later united with Austria "Huns" was applied to Germans during the Great War, implying that they practised the same savagery that made the original Huns the terror both of Europe and of Asia, but there is no such allusion here
- L 24 **Sulphurous canopy**—covering of sulphurous smoke
- L. 28 **Chivalry**—originally "knights" here simply "cavalry"

LORD BYRON

(1788-1824)

ANOTHER of the greatest names in English literature, but, curiously, enjoying an even greater fame on the Continent of Europe than in England. He is most famous for his long poem of travel, *Childe Harold's Pilgrimage*, and the comic epic, *Don Juan*.

(I) ALL FOR LOVE

O talk not¹ to me of a name great in story ;
The days of our youth are the days of our glory ;
And the myrtle and ivy of sweet two-and-twenty
Are worth all your laurels, though ever so plenty.

What are garlands and crowns to the brow that is
wrinkled ?

'Tis but as a dead flower with May-dew besprinkled :
Then away with all such from the head that is hoary—
What care I for the wreaths that can only give glory ?

Oh fame !—if I e'er took delight in thy praises,
'Twas less for the sake of thy high-sounding phrases, 10
Than to see the bright eyes of the dear one discover
She thought that I was not unworthy to love her.

There chiefly I sought thee, there only I found thee ;
Her glance was the best of the rays that surround
thee ;

When it sparkled o'er aught that was bright in my
 story, 15
 I knew it was love, and I felt it was glory.

NOTES

- L. 3. **Myrtle** and **ivy**—their leaves were used by the ancient Greeks for "garlands and crowns" (L. 5) on festal occasions, the **laurel** for the wreaths of victors. So the use is symbolical here—"the joys of youth are worth all the successes of age."
 L. 6. **May-dew**—the dews of early summer cannot revive a flower if it is dead
 L. 11. **Discover**—"reveal"; a rather rare meaning for the word in modern English, though once common.
 L. 13. **There**—in his lady's eyes.

(II) *THE EVE OF THE BATTLE OF WATERLOO*

(From CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE,
 CANTO III, 21, 22, 24, 25)

There was a sound of revelry by night,
 And Belgium's capital had gather'd then
 Her Beauty and her Chivalry, and bright
 The lamps shone o'er fair women and brave men
 A thousand hearts beat happily; and when 3
 Music arose with its voluptuous swell,
 Soft eyes look'd love to eyes which spake again,
 And all went merry as a marriage-bell;
 But hush! hark! a deep sound strikes like a rising
 knell!

Did ye not hear it?—No; 'twas but the wind, 10
 Or the car rattling o'er the stony street;
 On with the dance! let joy be unconfined;
 No sleep till morn, when Youth and Pleasure meet

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To chase the glowing Hours with flying feet—
 But hark !—that heavy sound breaks in once more, 15
 As if the clouds its echo would repeat ;
 And nearer, clearer, deadlier than before !
 Arm ! Arm ! it is—it is—the cannon's opening roar !

Ah ! then and there was hurrying to and fro,
 And gathering tears, and tremblings of distress, 20
 And cheeks all pale, which but an hour ago
 Blush'd at the praise of their own loveliness ;
 And there were sudden partings, such as press
 The life from out young hearts, and choking sighs
 Which ne'er might be repeated ; who could guess 25
 If ever more should meet those mutual eyes,
 Since upon night so sweet such awful morn could rise !

And there was mounting in hot haste : the steed,
 The mustering squadron, and the clattering car,
 Went pouring forward with impetuous speed, 30
 And swiftly forming in the ranks of war ;
 And the deep thunder peal on peal afar ;
 And near, the beat of the alarming drum
 Roused up the soldier ere the morning star ;
 While throng'd the citizens with terror dumb, 35
 Or whispering, with white lips—" The foe ! they
 come ! they come ! "

NOTES

The Battle of Waterloo was fought in Belgium on 18th June, 1815. Napoleon, Emperor of the French, was there finally defeated by the British and Prussians, and subsequently captured and exiled to St. Helena. The British Forces under the Duke of Wellington were in and around Brussels (" Belgium's capital "), waiting for the advance of the French army northwards. Wellington received news of its approach on the evening of the 15th

June, issued his orders, and attended a ball as though nothing had occurred. But later in the evening the word was passed round, the officers at the ball hastened to their regiments, and by sunrise all were on the march

- L 3 **Beauty and Chivalry**—*i.e.* "fair women and brave men"
- L 7. **Spake again**—gave an answer by the look that they returned
- L 9 **Knell**—keeps up the metaphor from the preceding line
Rising—commencing, beginning to be heard
- L 13 **No sleep**—let there be no sleep
Youth and Pleasure—abstract for concrete, compare "Beauty and Chivalry" above
- L 14 **To chase the glowing Hours**—to catch up the happy hours, one after another
With flying feet—*i.e.* with their dancing
- L. 16 As if it was being answered by thunder
- L. 26 **Mutual eyes**—compare L 7
- L 32 Some verb, such as "was heard," must be understood
- L 33 **Alarming**—here used in its original and literal sense, "calling to *arms*"

(III) THE OCEAN

(From CHILDE HAROLD'S PILGRIMAGE,

CANTO IV, 178, 179, 181, 182)

There is a pleasure in the pathless woods,
 There is a rapture on the lonely shore,
 There is society, where none intrudes,
 By the deep Sea, and music in its roar ·
 I love not Man the less, but Nature more, 5
 From these our interviews, in which I steal
 From all I may be, or have been before,
 To mingle with the Universe, and feel
 What I can ne'er express, yet cannot all conceal.

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Roll on, thou deep and dark blue Ocean—roll ! 10
 Ten thousand fleets sweep over thee in vain ;
 Man marks the earth with ruin—his control
 Stops with the shore ; upon the watery plain
 The wrecks are all thy deed, nor doth remain
 A shadow of man's ravage, save his own, 15
 When, for a moment, like a drop of rain,
 He sinks into thy depths with bubbling groan,
 Without a grave, unknell'd, uncoffin'd, and unknown.

The armaments which thunderstrike the walls
 Of rock-built cities, bidding nations quake, 20
 And monarchs tremble in their capitals,
 The oak leviathans, whose huge ribs make
 Their clay creator the vain title take
 Of lord of thee, and arbiter of war—
 These are thy toys, and, as the snowy flake, 25
 They melt into thy yeast of waves, which mar
 Alike the Armada's pride or spoils of Trafalgar.

Thy shores are empires, changed in all save thee—
 Assyria, Greece, Rome, Carthage, what are they ?
 Thy waters wash'd them power while they were free,
 And many a tyrant since ; their shores obey 31
 The stranger, slave, or savage ; their decay
 Has dried up realms to deserts :—not so thou ;—
 Unchangeable, save to thy wild waves' play,
 Time writes no wrinkle on thine azure brow : 35
 Such as creation's dawn beheld, thou rollest now.

NOTES

- L 6 **Steal**—withdraw myself
- L 9 **All**—altogether
- L 11 **In vain**—without effect on thee
- L 14 **Thy deed**—with the emphasis on “thy” Man may cause ruin on the earth, but the Ocean causes its own wrecks
- L 15 **Save his own**—his own “ravage” or destruction is all that Man can bring about on the Ocean
- L 19 **Thunderstrike**—strike with the thunder bolts of their guns This verb is generally confined to the participle ‘thunderstruck,’ used metaphorically
- L 22 **The oak leviathans**—*i.e.* the “armaments” of line 19. Till the middle of the nineteenth century ships of war were built of wood, chiefly oak *Leviathan* is the Biblical name (from the Hebrew) for a sea monster, and hence applied to ships
Huge ribs—part for whole The huge size of the ships causes Man their maker though himself only made of ‘clay,’ to call himself lord of the Ocean and supreme controller of War
- L 25 **As the snowy flake**—the ships disappear in the Ocean as completely as a snow flake would
- L 26 **Yeast of waves**—waves as frothy as yeast
Mar—“spoil” and so “destroy”
- L 27 **The Armada’s pride**—the proud Armada, the great fleet sent against England by Philip of Spain in Elizabeth’s reign Defeated by the English, its final destruction was due to storms
Spoils—the vessels captured by the British, which were destroyed in a storm shortly after the battle
Trafalgar—the great naval battle off the Cape of that name on the coast of Spain, where Nelson defeated the French and Spanish fleets in 1805,—England’s most famous victory at sea in history, as Waterloo is on land
- L 28 **Empires, changed**—the only permanent thing about them is the Ocean on their shores

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- L. 30. **Washed them**—brought them both power (through commerce) and also later many a tyrant to conquer them.
- L. 31. **Obey**—are in the possession of.
- L. 32. **The stranger, slave, or savage**—in contrast with the “imperial race” that once ruled these shores.
- L. 33. **To deserts**—so that they have become deserts.
- L. 34. **Save to**—except in answer to.

PERCY BYSSHE SHELLEY

(1792-1822)

"THE greatest lyric (or 'song') poet in English, if not the greatest in the world's literature" (Prof. Saintsbury). And for that reason "rather a poet's and a poet-lover's poet than one for the average person"; who, however, should be able without great difficulty to understand and appreciate the following pieces.

(I) *FROM "THE RECOLLECTION"*

We wander'd to the Pine Forest
That skirts the Ocean's foam ;
The lightest wind was in its nest,
The tempest in its home.
The whispering waves were half asleep, 5
The clouds were gone to play,
And on the bosom of the deep
The smile of heaven lay ;
It seem'd as if the hour were one
Sent from beyond the skies 10
Which scatter'd from above the sun
A light of Paradise !

We paused amid the pines that stood
The giants of the waste,
Tortured by storms to shapes as rude 15
As serpents interlaced,—

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And soothed by every azure breath
 That under heaven is blown,
 To harmonies and hues beneath,
 As tender as its own : 20
 Now all the tree-tops lay asleep
 Like green waves on the sea,
 As still as in the silent deep
 The ocean-woods may be.

How calm it was !—The silence there , 25
 By such a chain was bound,
 That even the busy woodpecker
 Made stiller with her sound
 The inviolable quietness ;
 The breath of peace we drew 30
 With its soft motion made not less
 The calm that round us grew.
 There seem'd, from the remotest seat
 Of the white mountain waste
 To the soft flower beneath our feet, 35
 A magic circle traced,—
 A spirit interfused around,
 A thrilling silent life ;
 To momentary peace it bound
 Our mortal nature's strife ;— 40
 And still I felt the centre of
 The magic circle there
 Was one fair form that fill'd with love
 The lifeless atmosphere.

NOTES

- L 3 **Nest**—*i.e.* home Shelley almost personifies the wind, and the metaphor (from birds) of a nest as its resting-place is peculiarly appropriate
- L 6 **Gone to play**—*i.e.* there were none present in the sky
A personification, again the clouds were not "on duty"
- L 7 **Bosom of the deep**—expanse of the Ocean
- L 9 **The hour**—really the *circumstances* of the hour
- L 10 **Beyond the skies**—the traditional idea that Heaven or Paradise is up above the sky we see
- Ls 11, 12 The sun's light seemed reinforced by a heavenly light coming from above it
- L 14 **The waste**—*i.e.* what would be called in India 'the jungle' Notice the personification again in "giants"
- L 15 **Tortured**—twisted
Rude—rough and strange
- L 17 **Soothed**—*i.e.* the pines were soothed or calmed
Azure—"blue, properly of the heaven or sky, but transferred, poetically, to the breaths or breezes that are 'blown under heaven' *i.e.* that move in the air"
- L 19 **To harmonies**—"soothed to" means calmed into, or till they make, "harmonies" *i.e.* agreeable patterns, of 'hues' *i.e.* colours, viz the light and shade "beneath" the trees
- L 20 **As tender as its own**—"its" refers to "heaven," and "tender" to "harmonies and hues"
The pines twisted by the storms (Ls 13, 14), have been calmed by all the beautiful gentle breezes that blow through the air till they make harmonious patterns of light and shade beneath them as delicate and gentle as those of the sky itself
- L 22 **Like green waves** }—the simile or comparison is sudden
- L 24 **The ocean-woods** }—denly changed from that between the waves on the *surface* of the sea and the green wavy surface of the tree tops, to that between the motionless forests of sea weed on the *bottom* of the sea and the motionlessness of the pine trees
- L 26 **Such a chain**—concrete metaphor for abstract idea, "such power prevented the silence from being broken"

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L. 28 Even the tapping of the woodpecker's beak on the trees merely made one notice more clearly how silent everything else was

L. 29. **Inviolable**—i.e. it could not be really broken by any such small disturbance

L. 30 **The breath of peace**=peaceful breath Even our breathing did not disturb the quietness

| Ls 33-36. **There seem'd to be traced** round the whole of the scene, from the furthest part of the distant snowy mountains to the flowers at our feet, **a magic circle**, or a sort of **spirit interfused** or "poured" around us, an emotion ("thrilling") of silence (See derivation of *interfuse* in dictionary.)

Seat="position on," and so "part of"

L. 34 **Mountain** (adj.) **waste** (noun)=desolate mountains

Ls 39, 40 It made the strife which is always in human nature cease for a moment

L. 43 **One fair form**—his companion's

L. 44 **The lifeless atmosphere.** Compare L. 38, which this seems to contradict But it really implies that all the life in the atmosphere was due to the presence of his companion without the presence of her love there would have been no "spirit of thrilling silent life interfused around"

(II) NIGHT

Swiftly walk over the western wave,

Spirit of Night!

Out of the misty eastern cave

Where, all the long and lone daylight,

Thou wovest dreams of joy and fear

5

Which make thee terrible and dear,—

Swift be thy flight!

Wrap thy form in a mantle gray

Star-inwrought;

Blind with thine hair the eyes of Day,

10

Kiss her until she be wearied out:

Then wander o'er city and sea and land,
Touching all with thine opiate wand—
Come, long-sought !

When I arose and saw the dawn, . 15
I sigh'd for thee ;

When light rode high, and the dew was gone,
And noon lay heavy on flower and tree,
And the weary Day turn'd to his rest
Lingering like an unloved guest, 20
I sigh'd for thee.

Thy brother Death came, and cried
Wouldst thou me ?
Thy sweet child Sleep, the filmy-eyed,
Murmur'd like a noon-tide bee 25
Shall I nestle near thy side ?
Wouldst thou me ?—And I replied
No, not thee !

Death will come when thou art dead, '
Soon, too soon— 30
Sleep will come when thou art fled ;
Of neither would I ask the boon
I ask of thee, beloved Night—
Swift be thine approaching flight,
Come soon, soon ! 35

NOTES

The *personification* in this poem must be noted at once. Shelley personifies Night or the Spirit of Night as a Goddess whom he invites to come quickly. Death he personifies as her brother, and Sleep as her child. Day, too, is personified.

"Flight" in L. 7 is not the usual idea of "fleeing away," but that of "flying to," as in the last line

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but one, "*approaching flight*" The picture then becomes clear. Night comes up out of her imaginary home in *the east* (L. 3, "misty eastern cave"), walking westward (L. 1) behind the sun as it travels westward.

No contradiction need be found between "walk" in L. 1 and "flight" in L. 7, since it is waves that are to be walked over, and that by a goddess.

- L. 4. **Lone**—lonely: *i.e.* Night is lonely in the daytime.
- L. 5. **Wovest**—metaphorical for "composedst," "preparedst"
- Ls. 8, 9 Night is to wrap herself in the grey night-sky as if it were a mantle into which stars have been "wrought" or worked
- Ls. 10, 11 If we drop the personification and metaphors, which make the magnificent poetry of these lines, they simply mean, in plain prose, that day is to be obscured by the shades of night and gently assailed by darkness till it is completely exhausted
- L. 13. **Opiate**—that brings drowsiness as opium does
 Night is often pictured in poetry as carrying a magic wand or rod which brings sleep to those she touches with it
- L. 14 **Long-sought**—by me.
- L. 17 **Rode**—the sun is said poetically to "ride" in the sky
- L. 18 **Noon**—*i.e.* the heat of noon.
- L. 19 **Turn'd to her rest**—a beautiful personification again for the decline of daylight in the afternoon and evening
- L. 23 **Wouldst thou me?**—do you *wish for* or *want* me? But in this use "would" is generally followed by a verb, not by a noun, and the prose expression here would be "Wouldst thou *have* me?"
- L. 24 Sleep (naturally the "child" of Night) is thought of as *filmy-eyed*, *i.e.* with dimmed eyes, when personified, because that is the condition of people as they fall asleep.
- L. 25. **Noontide bee**—like a bee at noon. Both the murmur of bees and the heat of noontide are naturally associated with sleep, because of their drowsy effect.
- L. 31. One can sleep at other times than night

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But divine melodious truth ;
 Philosophic numbers smooth ; 20
 Tales and golden histories
 Of heaven and its mysteries.

Thus ye live on high, and then
 On the earth ye live again ;
 And the souls ye left behind you 25
 Teach us, here, the way to find you,
 Where your other souls are joying,
 Never slumber'd, never cloying
 Here, your earth-born souls still speak
 To 'mortals, of their little week , 30
 Of their sorrows and delights ,
 Of their passions and their spites ;
 Of their glory and their shame ;
 What doth strengthen and what maim ;—
 Thus ye teach us, every day, 35
 Wisdom, though fled far away.

Bards of Passion and of Mirth
 Ye have left your souls on earth !
 Ye have souls in heaven too,
 Double-lived in regions new ! 40

NOTES

The poem is addressed to the great dramatic poets of the Elizabethan age (XVIth century), and was originally "written on the Blank Page before Beaumont and Fletcher's Tragi-Comedy *The Fair Maid of the Inn*" Beaumont and Fletcher rank, with Ben Jonson, next to Shakespeare among those dramatists, and wrote together no less than 52 plays

- L. 1 **Bards** were the wandering singers of early Britain (compare the "minstrels" of medieval times see Note on p. 59) So here the word is equivalent to "poets," poets who deal with subjects full of Passion and Mirth

- L. 2 *∴* their souls still live in their works.
- L. 4 **Double-lived**—*i.e.* enjoying immortal life there as well as on earth
- L. 5 **Those**—*∴* the souls which are enjoying heavenly immortality
- L. 8 **Parle**—"talk" An old and rare word, derived from the French
- Voices thund'rous**—*∴* the thunder itself
- L. 11 **Elysian**—Elysium was the classical Greek equivalent of Heaven
- L. 12 **Dian** or Diana was the Greek goddess of the Moon and of hunting. Animals, especially deer, were therefore often considered sacred to her, and in Elysium, according to the poet, only her fawns would be allowed to browse on the lawns or grassy places
- L. 13 **Tented**—blue bells are small bell shaped flowers growing in clusters on one stem. The poet imagines them of such size in Elysium as to provide tents for the souls of the Bards
- L. 14 The daisies, generally almost scentless, are imagined to be sweet as roses there and the roses themselves have a more than earthly scent
- L. 17 **The nightingale** (which, *NB*, has not the slightest connection with or resemblance to the "bulbul" of Persian poetry) normally sings, at night only, a song which poets traditionally interpret as full of melancholy and yearning. In Elysium it will not be senseless and dreamy ('trancéd'), but will sing divine truths (L. 19), clear philosophy (L. 20), and heavenly revelations (Ls. 21, 22)
- L. 20 **Numbers**—poetic for "verses" or "music". Compare "measure" in *Coleridge's* poem
- L. 26 **Teach us**—through the writings left to us, in which their souls are enjoying *earthly* immortality
- L. 27 **Joying**—poetical for "rejoicing"
- L. 28 **Slumber'd**—poetical for "sleeping"
- Cloying**—usually a transitive verb, "over satisfying". Keats has taken great liberties, in fact, with his English in this line. In prose it would read, "Never slumbering, never cloyed."
- L. 30 **Of their little week**—about their, *∴* mortals', short life. "Week" is used thus occasionally, but in poetry only
- L. 36 **Though fled**—though *ye* are fled

(II) *LA BELLE DAME SANS MERCI*

- " O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
 Alone and palely loitering ?
 The sedge has wither'd from the lake,
 And no birds sing.
- " O what can ail thee, knight-at-arms,
 So haggard and so woe-begone ?
 The squirrel's granary is full,
 And the harvest's done.
- " I see a lily on thy brow
 With anguish moist and fever-dew, 10
 And on thy cheeks a fading rose
 Fast withereth too."
- " I met a lady in the meads,
 Full beautiful—a *faery's* child,
 Her hair was long, her foot was light. 15
 And her eyes were wild.
- " I made a garland for her head,
 And bracelets too, and fragrant zone ;
 She look'd at me as she did love,
 And made sweet moan. 20
- " I set her on my pacing steed
 And nothing else saw all day long,
 For sidelong would she bend, and sing
 A *faery's* song.
- " She found me roots of relish sweet, 25
 And honey wild and manna-dew,
 And sure in language strange she said
 ' I love thee true.'

- " She took me to her elfin grot,
 And there she wept and sigh'd full sore ; 30
 And there I shut her wild wild eyes
 With kisses four.
- " And there she lulléd me asleep,
 And there I dream'd—Ah ! woe betide !
 The latest dream I ever dream'd 35
 On the cold hill's side.
- " I saw pale kings and princes too,
 Pale warriors, death-pale were they all :
 They cried—' La belle Dame sans Merci
 Hath thee in thrall ! ' 40
- " I saw their starved lips in the gloam
 With horrid warning gapéd wide,
 And I awoke and found me here
 On the cold hill's side.
- " And this is why I sojourn here 45
 Alone and palely loitering,
 Though the sedge is wither'd from the lake,
 And no birds sing."

NOTES

The title, derived from old French legends, means *The Beautiful Lady without Mercy*, and is sufficiently explained by the story which the Knight-at-arms gives in reply to the questions addressed to him by an imaginary speaker in the first three stanzas.

- L. 1. **Knight-at-arms**—fully armed knight. The ideas of the poem are drawn from the days of Romantic Chivalry, when Knights in-Armour devoted their lives to the service of Fair Ladies, and performed deeds of valour in Tournaments and Single Combats on their behalf.
- Ls. 3, 4. Signs of the approach of winter, which is not the natural season in which a knight would be seeking adventures.

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- L 6 **Woe-begone**—overwhelmed with woe, so "dismal-looking"
- L 7 The squirrel has made his store of nuts, etc., for the winter, and men have stored *their* harvest, more signs of the approach of winter
- Ls 9-12 The **lily** on his brow and the **rose** on his cheek are figurative for his complexion. His brow, white as a lily, is damp with the fever dew, i.e. sweat, of anguish, and his once rosy cheeks are growing paler and paler
- L 13 **Meads**—poetical for 'meadows'
- L 14 **Full**—fully, very
- L 15 **Faery**—the old fashioned and poetic spelling of "fairy"
- L 18 **Fragrant zone**—girdle of fragrant flowers
- L 19 **As she did**—as if she did
- L 20 **Made sweet moan**—uttered sweet sighs
- L 26 **Manna**—the divinely-sent food by which the Israelites were preserved in the Wilderness (see the Bible, *Book of Exodus*, Ch xvi) Hence any magical food. But here used as an adjective to 'dew'
- L 27 Her language was unintelligible to him, but her sighs (L 20) and her song (L 24) and her tears (L 30) all seemed to him signs of her love
- L 29 **Elfin grot**—"fairy cave" see "elf" and "grotto" in dictionary
- L 34 **Woe betide!**—usually means "May woe happen" to someone. But here it seems to be rather a general expression of grief than a curse on anyone in particular
- L 40 **In thrall**—poetic, "in bondage"
The kings and princes he saw in his dream were her previous victims
- L 41 **Gloam**—an old rare form of "gloom". Compare "the gloaming" for "the twilight"
- L 42 **Gapéd**—in prose would be "gaping"
- L 43. **Found me**—"found myself" poetic

du mmmhm

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L 4 **Apollo** was the Greek god of poetry The bards or poets are here supposed to hold their domains of literature "in fealty" to him, *i.e.* under his sovereignty

L 6. **Deep-brow'd**—a deep brow or high forehead is considered a sign of intellectual greatness, and so attributed here to Homer

Demesne—old spelling for "domain"

L 7 **Pure serene**—"serene" is here a noun, a rare poetic expression, taken from the Latin, for "clear air"

L 8 **Speak out**—in his translation of Homer's poetry

L 9 **Watcher of the skies**—*i.e.* an astronomer

L 10 **Swims into his ken**—gradually moves (as the earth revolves) into the circle of vision of his telescope

Ken properly means "knowledge" rather than "sight"

L 11 **Cortez**—one of the early Spanish explorers, famous for his conquest of Mexico Historically it was one Balboa who made the actual discovery

Eagle—*i.e.*, keen as an eagle's

L 13 **Surmise**—here implies "wondering expectation" rather than its usual meaning of "guess"

L 14 **Darien** is the Isthmus of that name continuous with the better-known Isthmus of Panama which connects North and South America

The immense possibilities of the newly discovered Ocean that lay before them struck those early explorers dumb with wonder and expectation Similar feelings filled Keats on his first introduction to Homer's poetry through Chapman's translation

If this selection, slight though it is, from the greatest English Poetry arouses similar feelings in any to whom it reveals for the first time a glimpse of those realms, it will not have altogether failed in its purpose.

NOTES ON METRE, RHYME AND FORM

WOTTON

Iambic

L. 15. Flatterers. To be read as flatt'ers probably

Ls 18, 20, 21, 23 Note the use of trochees in the first foot, preventing the rhythm from becoming too mechanical

JONSON

(I) Iambic

Note the effective use of an opening trochee again Note also the skilful arrangement of rhymes, *a b c b a b c b*, in each stanza

(II) Iambic

Rhymed couplets of differing numbers of feet in each case, thus giving a pleasing variety to the ear

HERRICK

(I) Iambic, with the common opening trochee

(II) The same

Note how the pleasing variety in length of line and skilful arrangement of rhymes is repeated as usual *exactly* in each stanza except in st II L 1 where the omission of a whole foot serves to emphasise the exclamation

HERBERT

(I) Iambic

Note the gain in expressiveness given by the occasional trochees (e.g. "angry | and brave") and by the extra syllable in the first rhyme of st 3

(II) Iambic

A good recitation of this poem will illustrate well how freely the standard iambic foot may be varied by trochees in actual

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reading, and with what advantage to the expression and meaning.

E.g. L. 16 may be read either

Yḗt lḗt | hū́m kḗep

or

Yḗt lḗt | hū́m kḗep.

Which is the more effective ?

SHIRLEY

Iambic.

Note the regularity with which the length of lines and order of rhymes are repeated in each stanza

MILTON

(I) See note at end on "The Sonnet Form"

(II) and (III). "Blank verse" or Iambic Pentameter, *i.e.* unrhymed lines of five feet each, for which the *standard* is an iamb, but permitting in the hands of great masters such as Shakespeare, Milton and Tennyson an almost infinite variety of cadence and expression, as recitation followed by analysis of these examples will show

LOVELACE

(I) Iambic

In st. I, though "nunnery" stands rhymed with "fly," it must be pronounced in the usual way. It is a visual rather than an audible rhyme

(II) Iambic

Note the rhyming of "liberty" at one time with "eye" and at another time with "be." This indicates well how rhymes are not intended to be stressed too mechanically in good English poetry—the similarity of the vowel sounds is always kept subordinate to necessities of sense and expression. But the consonant, if any, after the vowel-sound, must always be the same. "Good," for instance, can be rhymed with "flood," as here, but not with "foot" or "moon."

BUNYAN

Iambic, with the usual trochaic openings.

Compare previous note for the rhymes "fall—shall," "have—crave," "is—bliss"

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ADDISON

Iambic.

Note the much greater regularity both in metre and rhyme of this author, owing to his "classical" literary standard. The rhymes are all exact, and there is hardly a foot that can be called a trochee. Note how *The* in L 5 is cut down to *Th'* to avoid even the suggestion of an extra syllable. Similarly *evening* and *listening* were pronounced, if not actually printed, as *ev'ning*, *list'ning* and in *ethereal*, *terrestrial*, *radiant*, *glorious* the *e* or *i* preceding the last syllable must be pronounced like the consonant *y*.

POPE

(I) Iambic

The poem being an imitation of one by the Latin poet, Horace, a rough similarity to the original has been kept in the relative length of lines. But the metre is not strictly "classical," and the rhymes are a purely English feature.

(II) Iambic

This form of rhymed pairs of iambic pentameters is called the *heroic couplet*, owing to its use for "heroic" or epic poems. It was developed to such perfection by Pope that it set the chief fashion for English metre for nearly a century. Notice that the couplet is almost invariably closed at the end by a stop, instead of the syntax carrying on into the next couplet, that it hardly ever contains more than the strict ten syllables to each line, that the iambic feet are scarcely ever varied except at the beginning of a line, and that there is generally a well marked pause in the middle of each line. This results in a rather cramping regularity that gives no scope for deep or exalted poetic feeling and expression.

GRAY

Iambic

A good recitation of this poem will show well how skilfully regularity of metre is subordinate to and yet serves the expressiveness of the diction and its meaning. Note, however, that though the iambs are often replaced as analysis will show, by trochees or even spondees, Gray's "classical" tradition discouraged the intrusion of *extra* syllables. Hence the frequent "apostrophes"—*e g* "wand'ring," "th' inevitable."

But the English language insists on its greater freedom at times in spite of classical rules, *e g* "the echo^{ing} horn" (L 19). Here we get a foot of three short syllables, illustrating what

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Prof. Sauntsbury names Equivalence, viz the acceptance of two short or unaccented syllables as the equivalent of one long or accented one. This is the great distinction between English and French poetry, and is due partly to Latin influence, but much more to the original habits of Anglo-Saxon. The fashion of Pope's and Gray's time, however, demanded "elision" of the extra syllable in *reading* the words, so that these would have been pronounced "the ech'ing horn" or "the echwing horn." Fortunately their successors rejected this unnecessary exaggeration of regularity and reasserted, within due limits, the Anglo-Saxon freedom. Consider what Wordsworth's perfect lines in *Lucy* would be reduced to if they had to be read

' Where riv'lets dance their wayward round,
And beauty born of murm'ring sound
Shall pass into her face " !

Gray's rhymes also it will be noticed, are for the most part strictly regular and it is only towards the end of this long poem that he allows himself any liberty in "beech—stretch," "rove—love" and "abode—God"

COWPER

Anapaestic

Three anapaests to a line, varied by trochees in the first feet only of the lines. The rhyming of "survey—sea" may possibly indicate that "sea" was then pronounced "say," as "tea" was certainly pronounced "tay." Similarly "thought" may have been pronounced "thot," a true rhyme to "not" in the polite circles of the day. But rhyming plain and "again" with "man" is certainly a liberty.

BLAKE

Trochaic, of three and a half feet with an occasional extra syllable to introduce a line.

WORDSWORTH

(I) Iambic

No division into stanzas and an irregular recurrence of rhymes.

(II) Iambic

"The untrodden," "A violet," would probably have been read by Wordsworth as written without the harsh elision required by his predecessors (see under *Gray*, para. 2). And note in the last line how if the line is to be read with proper expression the first syllable in "difference," whether you call it "accented"

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or ' long,' has to take up practically all the accent that, in a merely mechanical beat, would fall on the syllable "-ence

(III) Iambic

But note the assertions of freedom of accent. The first two words, for instance, need practically the same accent, and must therefore "quantitatively" be reckoned as a *spondee*. In L. 4 there is an uncommon alteration of beat that makes the second foot a trochee, instead of, as more usual, the first. And among the extra syllables that assert the principle of 'Equivalence' (see under *Gray*, para. 2) the retention of "Even" in L. 22, instead of the stock poetic abbreviation "E'en," is as significant and effective as the instances in the next stanza, referred to previously.

A comparison of "memory" in the last line but one with the same word as it must be read in L. 38 of Gray's *Elegy* will further confirm the freedom of English in the matter of accent. (See p. 4. Note.)

(IV), (V) Italian Sonnet form—see note at end

The difference in the Sestet rhymes should be noted. Note, too, how the substance of each Octave runs over slightly into the Sestet, and how freely the iambic metre is varied.

SCOTT

(I) Iambic

Most of Scott's longer poems are written in these tetrameter or "four foot" couplets, with occasional variations in the rhymes, as in the first six lines of this piece, as well as with the usual trochaic variations.

(II) Dactylic.

The "standard" is two dactyls to the first lines, one dactyl and a trochee to the second lines, and alternate rhymes of one or two syllables each. The rhymes of the longer lines, however, are little more than a rough resemblance, or an "internal" rhyme (e.g. Ls. 21, 37) takes their place. Note the "rapid" effect that the use of the dactyl gives to the diction, and how the metre overruns the rhyme-scheme in Ls. 9 and 11.

Come from deep | glen and
 From | mountain so | rocky.
 The | war-pipe and | pennon
 Are | at Inver | locky.

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while in the third stanza it seems actually to overrun itself and become *anapaestic* in Ls 17, 19 and 21. That stanza, in fact, illustrates well how the metrical feet of "quantitative" Greek and Latin diction can never be more than a limited, though still invaluable, method of measurement for the native "accents" of English.

(III) Anapaestic

Two feet to a line, with an extra syllable at the end of each line, utilised to form alternate two-syllabled rhymes. At times the opening foot is an iamb and the extra syllable of the previous line can be carried over, in reading, to complete it as an anapaest.

Notice the same effect of "rapidity" given to the diction by anapaests here as by dactyls in the previous piece or to put it in English terms, the value for certain effects of having regularly *two* unaccented syllables between the accented syllables instead of only one as usual. What has happened in L 23?

COLERIDGE

Iambic, with the usual trochaic variations, but in two places, Ls. 31-34 and Ls. 37-41, the whole "beat" of the line so changes that it must be reckoned as trochaic metre.

In L 41, *e g*, the accents fall as follows,

Singing of Mount Áborá,

the last syllable making a very free rhyme with "saw," L 38. Another rather free rhyme may be observed in "forced—burst," Ls 19, 20.

Notice how the *Iambic Pentameter* asserts itself as the most natural English line for continuous description though here enriched by rhyme, the rhyme itself being enriched by occasional two-syllabled forms. The irregularity of the rhymes, the unevenness of the lines, and the temporary changes of metre, are not unusual in such "romantic" poetry, but in this case may be attributed particularly to the singular origin of the poem.

SOUTHEY

Iambic

This arrangement of rhymes is a very common one in six-line stanzas.

LAMB

An imitation of one of the less common "classical" metres, the "standard" of which is the two following feet repeated twice for each line:

— u u u | — u

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The application of the metre is only exact in L. 2, dactyls frequently taking the place of the first of the two feet, and sometimes of the second. But since it is definitely an experiment, however freely carried out, in *classical metre*, rather than in English accented diction, rhymes, as being unclassical are dispensed with.

CAMPBELL

Iambic

The striking similarity of the beat of this poem to that of the *ghazal*, often recited by Indian students might be studied analytically, by our Urdu poets for analysis is essential for the full and effective development of the *forms* of literature. How is Metre represented in Urdu literature?

BYRON

(I) Anapaestic

Trochees substituted in the first foot of the line prevent the beat from becoming too monotonous. And an extra syllable at the end of each line provides the two syllabled rhymes that are commonly found in anapaestic metres.

(II) and (III) Spenserian stanza

Invented by Edmund Spenser, the great poet of Queen Elizabeth's reign (XVIth century) for his long narrative poem *The Faerie Queene*. It consists of eight *iambic pentameter* or "five foot" lines followed by an *Alexandrine* or "six foot" iambic line. The rhymes in each stanza running regularly in the order *a b a b b c b c c*.

Its variety makes it obviously far superior to the rhyming couplets brought into fashion by Pope and his contemporaries for such poems and its use was revived when English poetry shook off their cramping classical traditions.

The iambic metre is varied freely with trochees according to the English tradition and no better example of the value of its disciplined freedom could be found than in the last line of the first stanza here given.

But hush ! hark ! a deep sound strikes like a rising knell

The six beats of that dramatic line remain reducible to the six feet of the Alexandrine line and metrical analysis reveals only two trochees among them, and the remainder true iambs.

But hush ! | hark ! a | deep sound | strikes like | a ris | ing knell.

Yet how effective is the result !

SHELLEY

(I) Iambic.

Technically the stanzas are of four lines each with alternate rhymes. But grouped as printed into composite stanzas of multiples of four they form as it were paragraphs, much superior to a succession of simple four-line stanzas for bringing out the stages in the development of the main theme.

Shelley's rhymes are sometimes strange and ingenious, but in this piece "there—woodpecker" and "of—love" are the only cases of unusual freedom in this respect. There are also less irregularities than usual in the iambic beat.

(II) An excellent example of how the essentially revolutionary genius of the "greatest lyric poet in English" refuses to submit to the discipline of classical metres in the highest flights of his genius, such as this poem. The rapid dactylic foot seems to dominate the earlier stanzas, with peculiar effectiveness for the sense. In the third stanza we are tempted to trace anapaests. Trochees seem to assert themselves frequently throughout and specially in the last stanza, yet there are lines in this last that might be called iambic.

English accent has in fact, reasserted its independence in respect of the unaccented syllables, which here admit no control save that of the requirements of the sense and feeling. The only "rules" admitted are those of *beat* and *rhyme*, in a regular succession in each stanza of 4, 2, 4, 4, 4, 4, 2 for the former, and a scheme of *ababccbb* for the latter. But it should still be noted how strictly the stanzas conform to these rules, even if Shelley does permit himself to rhyme "out" with "wrought" and "dawn" with "gone".

rhymed

couplets. Occasionally the half-foot is expanded into a full foot by a two-syllabled rhyme, and "histories—mysteries" in L. 22 is a rare instance of a three-syllabled rhyme.

One or two lines are introduced by an extra syllable, e.g. Ls. 10, 22 and 30. Otherwise the metre is exceptionally regular.

(II) Iambic.

Three lines of four feet each, generally regular in metre, followed by a fourth line of two feet in which the variations in

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accent are often best read as spondees, providing most effective pauses, e g

And nō | birds sīng ,

or are quickened up, to suit the sense, by an anapaest, e g

And hēr eyes | wēre wīld

The rhymes, it will be noticed, are confined to the second and fourth lines, but the first lines invariably require a pause at their end and the separation of the phrases in the fourth lines gives additional effect. This effect would be largely lost if the unrhymed lines were merged in the rhymed ones and the stanzas printed as long couplets. The four line stanza here is therefore the essential "form" of the poem and not an optional way of printing it.

(III) See note below on "The Sonnet Form"

The force with which the Sestet takes up the new turn of thought is particularly noticeable in this sonnet. As regards the rhyming of "demesne—serene," fashions in pronunciation are always changing slightly, and though we should nowadays say "*demean*," it is quite possible that it was "*demean*" in Keats' time.

THE SONNET FORM

A sonnet is a short poem of fourteen lines, written in accordance with certain definite and strict rules of metre and rhyme, and dealing with one idea.

The form was first used in Italy in the thirteenth century, and became popular owing to its use by the famous Italian poet Petrarch in the fourteenth century.

From Italy it was introduced into France and thence into England, where, in the Elizabethan Age, poets imitated Italian metres very commonly. But they treated them very freely, and Shakespeare, for example, invented a Sonnet form of his own. Later writers used both the Shakespearean and the Italian forms, but Milton always, and Wordsworth generally, keep to the strict Italian form. Keats uses either. These three are the greatest sonnet-writers among the English poets represented in this selection, but later poets have produced many well-known sonnets, usually in the Italian form, and probably everyone who ever attempts to write English verse tries his hand sooner or later at a sonnet. Its charm consists in the opportunity it gives for making beauty of thought and expression.

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not merely triumph over but actually derive advantage from the artificial limitations of form imposed.

The *Metre* is in all cases *iambic pentameter*, i.e. five iambic feet or their equivalents in every line. It is the *Rhyme-Order* and *Divisions* that distinguish the Italian and Shakespearean forms.

(I) *The Italian Sonnet.*

Divisions.—An "Octave" of eight lines, followed by a "Sestet" of six lines, with a definite pause in sense either at or near the end of the eighth line. After this pause the Sestet catches up the main idea of the Octave and gives it a new turn, and the art and beauty of Italian sonnets depend on the skill with which this is done. Judged by this standard the first of the two sonnets by Wordsworth here given is weak but the second of his, and Milton's, and Keats', illustrate the principle very clearly.

Rhymes.—(a) The Octave is arranged in two "quatrains" or groups of four lines in which the "outer" rhymes of the two are continuous, while the "inner" rhymes may vary or not. thus *a b b a a b b a* or *a b b a a c c a*. In all the examples here given the former scheme is followed.

(b) The Sestet has only one rule for its rhymes, that it must not end with a rhyming couplet. Otherwise all variations are permissible. The scheme in Milton's sonnet here, "*def def*" is the most usual, but "*dedede*" is also common (see the second of Wordsworth's, and Keats', here): and the first of Wordsworth's here, "*de ef df*," illustrates a freer scheme.

(People have been known to take a book of sonnets and merely read the rhymes in each. It is not a practice to be commended for the proper appreciation of *poetry*, but a glance of that sort at a number of the more famous sonnets in English literature will give a better understanding of the *craftsmanship* involved in this form of English poetry.)

(II) *The Shakespearean Sonnet.*

Divisions.—Three quatrains followed by a rhymed couplet. The Rhymed Couplet at the end, which is not permitted in the Italian form, is the distinguishing mark of the Shakespearean Sonnet.

Rhymes.—Alternate in the quatrains, and not generally repeated in the subsequent quatrains, thus *a b a b, c d c d, e f e f, g g*.

Though this Selection has refrained from any attempt to "represent" Shakespeare, the following famous Sonnet of his may be given as a characteristic example of his Sonnet-form:

TRUE LOVE

Let me not to the marriage of true minds
Admit impediments. Love is not love
Which alters when it alteration finds,
Or bends with the remover to remove —

O no ! it is an ever fixed mark
That looks on tempests, and is never shaken ,
It is the star to every wandering bark,
Whose worth's unknown, although his height be taken.

Love's not Time's fool, though rosy lips and cheeks
Within his bending sickle's compass come ,
Love alters not with his brief hours and weeks,
But bears it out ev'n to the edge of doom —

If this be error, and upon me proved,
I never writ, nor no man ever loved

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